SPECIAL EDITION

METAL HAMMER

METALLICA

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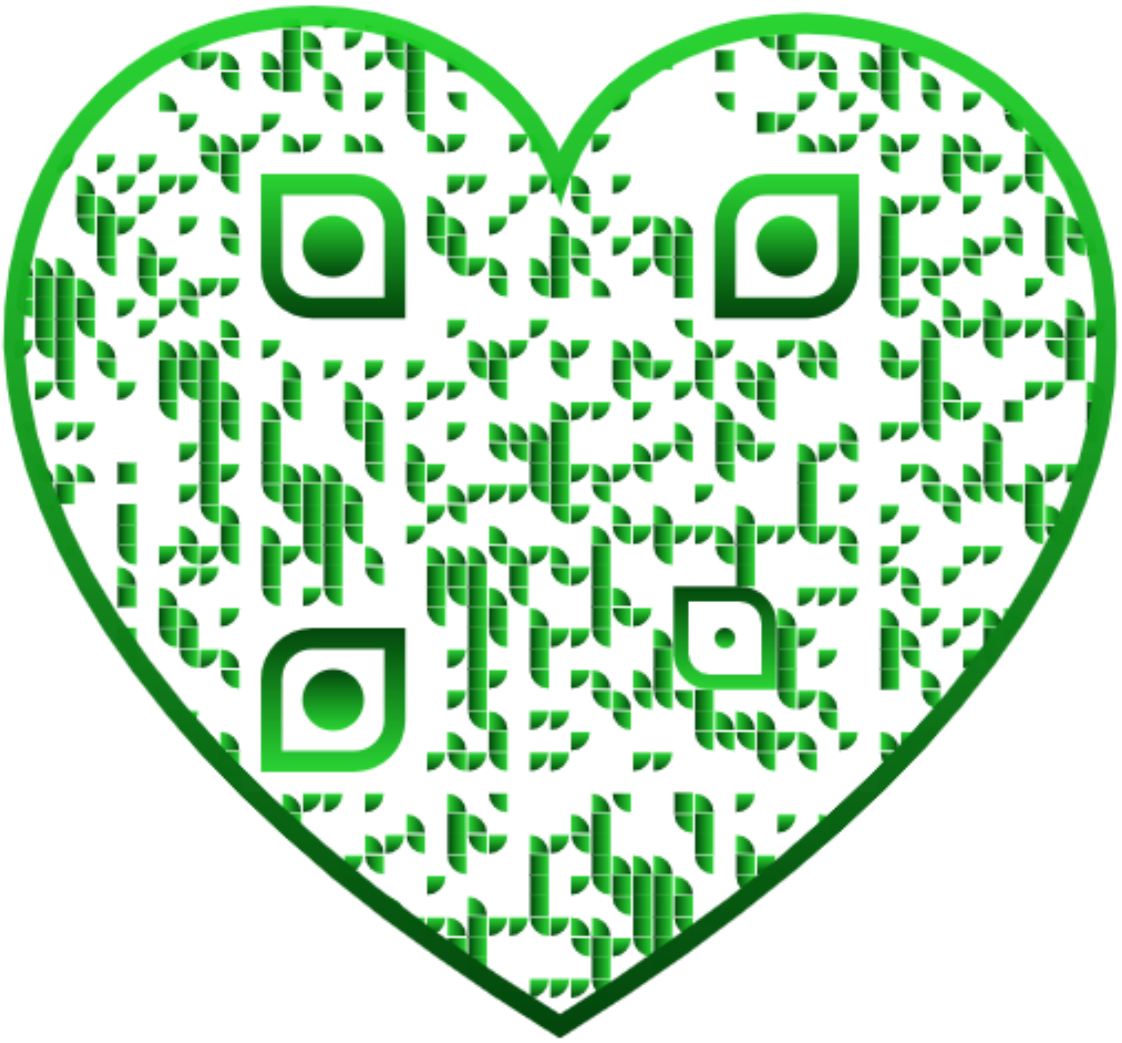
FUTURE
ISSUE 355



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YOU CAN FIT A LOT INTO 40 YEARS

YOU COULD WATCH nearly a million episodes of *South Park*. You could build the Empire State Building 35 times over. You could relive The Beatles' entire career four times. And yet, that very same number is the amount of time we've had Metallica in our lives. It seems unimaginable – that that same, scruffy thrash metal band who came bowling out of California four decades ago could still be here and ruling the world today, albeit not without some significant evolutions, drama, tragedy and chaos along the way.

With The Four Horsemen due to celebrate their 40th with a blockbuster pair of shows at the Chase Center next month, we decided to get in on the party. How? By delivering 40 – yes, 40 – brand new or previously unpublished interviews, bringing you the definitive guide to Metallica's incredible career, through the eyes of those who saw it happen. From Lars to Jason to the dude who first played guitar on *Hit The Lights*, we've got them all, and they've all had something unique to say about metal's biggest band.

So, read on, and raise a glass with us to James, Lars, Kirk, Rob, Jason and Cliff – and, yes, Dave and Ron too. They've all played their part, and chances are, metal today would be a very different place without them. Here's to the next 40.

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MEET THE BAND

ELEANOR GOODMAN
DEPUTY EDITOR
Not content with helping to string together this issue's mammoth Metallica special, El got stuck into the nuts and bolts too – including interviewing, amongst others, Metallica's one-time therapist Phil Towle!

PAUL BRANNIGAN
WRITER
A legend of the rock journalism game, Paul has written more about Metallica than James Hetfield has riffs. Which is why his name is peppered across this issue. Our fave? Paul's eye-opening piece with mega-producer Bob Rock.

STEPHEN HILL
WRITER
We kicked Stephen off the *Metal Hammer* Podcast for a week so he could interview a few legends for us for this month's issue. Jason Newsted? Easy. Rob Halford? Sure. Doyle Wolfgang Von Frankenstein? But of course! Lovely stuff.

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FRONT ROW

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THE BIG PICTURE

HORSEMEN ON THE ROAD

IN 1984, METALLICA embarked on their very first European tour, supporting proto-thrash heavyweights Venom on their Seven Dates Of Hell trek. This shot, taken of the Four Horsemen backstage at the IJsselhallen in Zwolle, Netherlands, on February 11 of that year, shows the first 'classic' line-up of the band – bassist Cliff Burton, guitarist and frontman James Hetfield, drummer Lars Ulrich and guitarist Kirk Hammett. For many, it remains Metallica's definitive line-up – the four-piece that, together, would change metal forever. It's all the more amazing, then, that even following Cliff's death and keenly felt loss, the band would rally to change metal forever all over again. And again. And again.

ROBERT HOETINK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

THE HOT TOPIC

THE METAL BAND WHO ESCAPED IRAN

Confess were forced to flee their home country after being jailed for playing metal. Today they're more furious than ever

WORDS: RICH HOBSON • PICTURE: CAMILLA NORVOLL

Nikan and Arash have teamed up with Norwegian musicians to release their third album

CONFESS'S SECOND ALBUM, 2015's *In Pursuit of Dreams*, had barely been out two weeks when the band's founder, Nikan Khosravi, was arrested by 10 members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard in his Tehran home. As an Iranian metal musician, Nikan had always known his music was going to ruffle feathers, but he didn't expect to be sent straight to prison under charges of blasphemy and propaganda against the state.

"They said the lyrical content was against the whole establishment and organised religion," he says. "Which it was. That was the whole idea – we wanted to protest and use our human rights to express ourselves through the art we made."

While lyrics such as *'This town is not a place to live'* (from *Teh-Hell-Ran*) hardly seem incendiary to Western ears, in Iran those sentiments were more than enough to get Nikan and his bandmate, Arash Ilkhani, jailed and kept in solitary confinement for several months.

"THEY WANTED TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OUT OF US"

Nikan fled Iran after being released on bail ahead of his trial and made his way to Norway, with Arash later following him. Now the pair are set to release Confess's third album, *Revenge At All Costs*, in January 2022. The album is testament to both the drive and the immense personal growth they underwent on the journey from teenagers, when the band was formed, to men with a mission. "If I give up now, it was all for nothing," he says, simply.

Nikan formed Confess in 2010, when he was just 16, releasing their debut album, *Beginning Of Dominion*, two years later. Despite subsequent events, they were far from the only metal fans or musicians in Iran.

"There *is* a scene there, it just doesn't exist in the same way as elsewhere," Nikan explains. "You walk past someone on the street and hear something through their headphones you recognise, or you add someone on Facebook and see they're wearing a band shirt."

Metal fandom exists within Iran as something of an open secret. Like many of their peers, Confess were forced to operate largely in isolation while receiving the occasional word of encouragement from like-minded people in the region. Nikan cites the band Qutin as an inspiration for his own endeavours.

"They weren't around long enough that we could say they helped guide us, but the one album they put out was great. It was kind of technical melodic death metal and hearing that made me realise if they could do it, I could."

While the government largely treats Western media as dangerously subversive, the general stance isn't to rigidly police people's consumption habits so much as condemn those that might use their music to speak out. Confess were unapologetically political and forthright about their opinions about the world, which Nikan believes is the reason they were so publicly

arrested. "They wanted to make an example out of us," he says.

While Nikan and Arash were locked away in solitary confinement ("They were fairly polite, if you don't count the psychological torture of isolation," he says of their incarcerators), Confess's story made headlines around the world, garnering support from many metal artists and fans.

Nikan ultimately fled Iran via a risky (and illegal) border crossing into Turkey, eventually settling in Norway as a refugee. Despite everything they had gone through, he hadn't given up on making music – if anything, his resolve had grown. After being joined by Arash, the pair set to rebuilding Confess, recruiting local musicians to help record their third album.

A pummelling combination of NWOAHM-style groove and Middle Eastern melodies, *Revenge At All Costs* is a call-out for metal fans worldwide to fight for what they believe in. Even now, with their story so publicised, they still receive messages from metal musicians in Iran continuing to eke out an existence in the underground. And while the mental scars of their experiences are only just beginning to fade, Nikan is as resolute as ever about the band's future.

"I'm going to be remembered as somebody that fought for what was right," he says. "Even if I won a Grammy, I'd be remembered as the guy who was sent to prison, became a refugee and still carried on. This thing that can be a hobby for a lot of people cost me a lot. To some people, it's insane that we paid that price and they think we should have just given up. But I'm happy we continued – if I come back onto this planet a hundred times, I'll do the exact same fucking thing."

***REVENGE AT ALL COSTS* WILL BE RELEASED VIA REXIUS RECORDS ON JANUARY 22**

10 THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

What's been blowing our tiny brains

SCOTT KOENIG RIP
The former Biohazard and Fear Factory manager died last month aged 57.

ROB HALFORD IS A HERO
The Priest legend recently revealed he is in remission from prostate cancer.

POPPY REALLY LOVES UNDERGROUND METAL
On Amoeba's What's In My Bag? series, she grabbed records by Sunn O))), Boris and Craft. Legend!

BABYMETAL HAVE TAKEN THE STAIRWAY TO LIVING LEGEND
And no, we don't know what that means.

Rob Halford: great news, Metal God!

THERE IS NOTHING SABATON CAN'T MAKE MERCH OUT OF
Boardgames! Candles! Pants?!

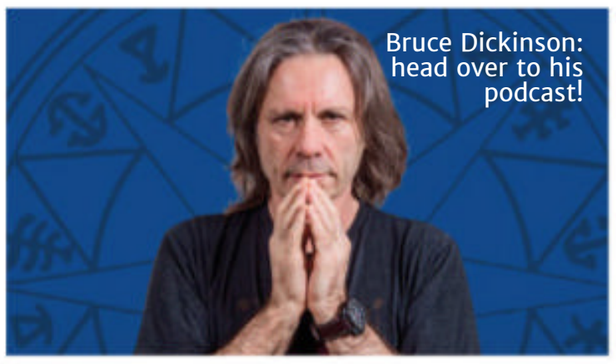
CHINO MORENO THINKS STEPHEN CARPENTER'S VIEWS ARE... DIFFERENT
The Deftones frontman doesn't agree with all of his bandmate's opinions on vaccines and, um, the Earth being flat.

THE (SLIPKNOT) KIDS ARE ALRIGHT
Vended, featuring sons of Slipknot's Corey and Clown, are actually pretty damn solid! Nice!

TOM MORELLO AND TED NUGENT ARE PALS. NO, REALLY
"I reserve the right to be friends with anybody," says Tom when explaining the unlikely friendship.

BRUCE DICKINSON HAS A PODCAST
It's called Psycho Schizo Espresso. So there you go.

IT'S DECEMBER NEXT MONTH
WHERE HAS THIS YEAR GONE?!


Bruce Dickinson: head over to his podcast!

WHO HAS THE WORST TASTE?

Spiritbox's Courtney LaPlante fronts the most exciting young band on the planet. So obviously you asked her about horror movies, music taste and, er, farts

WORDS: ALI COOPER • PICTURES: TRAVIS SHINN

SPIRITBOX ARE *THE* breakout band of 2021. The Canadians' debut album, *Eternal Blue*, crashed into the Top 20 on both sides of the Atlantic, helped by stellar singles like *Constance* and *Circle With Me*. To celebrate this impressive achievement, we called her on Zoom and refused to let her hang up until she'd answered a big pile of your questions about everything from unlikely musical inspirations to intra-band flatulence.

Have you ever used a spirit box? And if so, what was the result?
Steve Sowerby (Facebook)
"I've never used a real one but we've simulated what they do with scanning radio frequencies. Nothing weird happened but I find all that stuff really disturbing so it creeped me out hearing random voices. I'm really sceptical of it but too scared to use an actual spirit box and they're kinda hard to come by."

Given your love of *Midsommar* from the *Holy Roller* video, what are your other favourite horror movies?
Stacy Roberts (email)
"I really like both of the Ari Aster movies I've seen, *Midsommar* and *Hereditary*. I like disturbing thrillers and his movies execute that well in a way that they've greatly impacted me but I never wanna watch them again because I was so disturbed by them. I still love to read everything I can find about them and their beautiful cinematography, though. I also love *The Ring* – the whole tone of the movie is so dark and cold. *The VVitch* is one of the most beautifully shot movies too. I like when movies use horror as a metaphor and the scary part isn't the supernatural, it's the real-life stuff. I hadn't even seen *Midsommar* when we made that video; one of Bill's friends got married and had a bunch of fake flowers, we were shooting it ourselves in a pandemic so we used the tools we had."

Who has the worst taste in music in the band?
Tom Sorrell (email)
"Probably me! I like some stuff because it makes me want to dance and some because it makes me run faster on runs. I like the music that you get so into that you want to share it with someone else in the car, then you're analysing it along with them and realise it sucks. Bill [Crook, bass] and Michael [Stringer, guitars] like corny stuff but they have very good music taste, Bill loves American Football and Michael likes the new Turnstile, Zev [Rose, drums] likes a lot of the weird jam band stuff but I think it's awesome."

Bill, Courtney and Mike: souls of discretion

When did you start writing *Eternal Blue* and which song was the first you made?
@bludsouldier (Twitter)
"Michael and I started writing in 2019 but I remember starting to hear all of our ideas in spring 2019. We had them all numbered as 'Song 1' at first but I think the title track *Eternal Blue* was one of the first ones written, with *Halcyon* and *The Summit*."

How did the collaboration with Architects' Sam Carter [on *Yellowjacket*] come about?
Daniel Pitts (Facebook)
"We were finishing up recording *Eternal Blue* and we had a week left. Bill in our band is friends with the guys in Architects; his band was on their first Canadian tour 15 years ago and they've always kept in touch. Sam always kept an eye on us because of his friend, he became a big supporter of the band and he asked Bill if he could be on the record. I wasn't gonna have any features on it because I have so many talented friends and there wasn't

“WE’RE ALL SILENT BUT DEADLY KIND OF PEOPLE”

time to fit everyone in. I didn't want anyone to feel bad that I didn't choose them, but when one of your favourite vocalists comes to you, you'd be an idiot not to say yes. The song we chose for him to sing on is very influenced by his own style because we're fans of Architects and it's crazy to hear his voice on our album. I love how our voices sound together."

Which member of the band farts the most?
@CVRLOMUSTDIE (Twitter)
"I can't tell because I think we're all silent but deadly kind of people, nobody proudly does it. I think living amongst a bunch of people, you're either someone who's learned to be discreet about their gross bodily functions or you're someone that finds it hilarious to just let it rip all the time. We're all discreet people."

What's the best thing fans like me can do to support newer bands like yours?
@JoFleischer1 (Twitter)
"The best way is to tell your friends about them. If you want to buy merch, that really helps bands out. Some bands don't have a lot of control over their merch, but we're in direct contact with all that stuff. If a band has a fan club, join that! We and a few other bands have Patreon because that way people are getting something in exchange rather than just donating money. We made it because people would send us Super Chat money on Youtube Live and we felt really bad because we weren't doing anything for them."

As someone who is currently losing a loved one to Alzheimer's, I find listening to your song *Constance* to be both extremely cathartic and also difficult. How challenging was it to put together the lyrics and to perform it live?
@The_Baranyai (Twitter)
"That song was written in 2019 and it was always meant to be the closing track on our album. It came together very interestingly because we asked the director of the *Constance* video Dylan Hryciuk to work on it, but as an experiment we asked him to do that before I showed him any lyrics – he just heard the song demo. I wrote the song about my grandma and he presented us with his video idea about

"I'M TOO SCARED TO USE AN ACTUAL SPIRIT BOX"

Anyone know Courtney's inspirations? Answers on a postcard!

his grandma, her name is Constance and we named the song as a tribute to Dylan and all the hard work he's done for our band. I feel like people that are going through the struggle, like the person that asked this lovely question, feel that even though your loved ones haven't left the world yet, you already feel like you've lost them. It was hard for both of us – the tears I cry in that video are real tears. I've been OK singing it when we toured this summer; I performed it for my grandpa and my uncles who came to one of the shows. My grandpa never listened to the song before because it was too hard for him, so it was very special that I got to sing it in front of them. It used to make me really sad to hear it and sing it, but now a year later, I feel comfort and happiness hearing it."

Who's your biggest inspiration in terms of vocals?
@ALLOVEISLOST (Twitter)
"I think about this all the time and sadly I don't have one person – every syllable of everything I've ever done is inspired by someone and I can't put my finger on it yet. I need to wait until someone figures it out for me and writes who Courtney clearly sounds like and I'll go, 'Oh my god, you're right!'"

Can you see Spiritbox maintaining a similar creative sound/output for future songs and albums, or do you and Mike feel that you may develop into different styles?
@pastelplanetary (Twitter)
"It's so hard to tell because normally we create everything in this vacuum where there's no one to influence because no one cares about our music, but now we have all this hard objective data of the songs people like and don't like. I really try not to concern myself with that too much because I don't want it to mess with the creative process, but I think it's always going to stay the way it is: we go wherever the song takes us."

SPIRITBOX'S *ETERNAL BLUE* IS OUT NOW VIA RISE RECORDS

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THE SLAYLIST

DOC COYLE

Megadeth, Michael Jackson and Muse all live happily together inside the Bad Wolves guitarist's head

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL • PICTURE: JIM LOUVAU

"I DON'T THINK there is one singular artist that had as much of an impact on me as **MICHAEL JACKSON**, and the reason I chose *Beat It* is because it is, like, the rock one. What made Michael special, and why you'll never have another artist like him ever again, is that *Beat It* is everything, it's rock, it's pop, it's r'n'b… you know. There is no artist that has tried to combine everything and captured fans of all music. *Beat It* is every genre in one.

"It's feels kinda hack because the song is so popular, but I have to put *Bohemian Rhapsody* by **QUEEN** in here. This is right before I started listening to rock and metal and playing guitar, but I saw *Wayne's World* and it was this weird thing of seeing something from 20 years ago that it felt like time had forgot being reintroduced to a new generation. It felt new, and it made me realise how important the guitar was, and also how adventurous music could be. There's another film connection with *You Could Be Mine* by **GUNS N' ROSES**. I was obsessed with *Terminator 2*, I went to see it three times in the cinema, and then you get that music video. It's funny, in the movie Edward Furlong and his homie are riding around for about three hours and they only listen to *You Could Be Mine*! That's how much of a banger it is!

"**MEGADETH**'s *Symphony Of Destruction* is like my radioactive spider bite origin story. There were these two girls in my neighbourhood and they were kinda rockers, and I went round their house and saw the video for *Symphony Of Destruction* and it was just like a lightbulb exploding in my mind. Everything about it – the guitar tone, the drums, his voice – it was like I had discovered a secret that no one else knew about. This is when I had graduated to watching *Headbangers Ball* on MTV. I still hadn't really got into the super-heavy stuff yet, but that all changed with **PANTERA**'s *5 Minutes Alone*. It's crazy because it's not melodically sung but it's so catchy and the video was so cool. They were the baddest dudes you've ever seen, and I just had to be around that, it opened the floodgates for me to get into more extreme music, Slayer, Sepultura, death metal… me and my brother downtuned our guitars one step and we never went back.

"MESHUGGAH BASICALLY BROKE MY BRAIN"

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"I don't remember how I discovered **MESHUGGAH** but when I did, they basically broke my brain. The *None* EP that they released still sounds unreal today, it just made me realise what was possible with music, that song *Humiliative* was like, 'Are you fucking kidding me?!' And **AT THE GATES**' *Slaughter Of The Soul* – I had never heard guitars like that, the tonality. It's so fast, so melodic and such tight pop song structures. I was obsessed with that album, all the way down to the album cover.

"You probably don't know this band, they're from New Jersey, **FOR THE LOVE OF** and they put out an album called *Feasting On The Will Of Humanity* and the opening track is called *Crawl To Hide*. [Doc's former band] God Forbid saw this band rehearse and it changed our lives – they introduced us to the hardcore scene. They were the first band to take us out of New Jersey, we were like their understudies. It was the first time I shared air with a great band; they showed us how the sausage was made.

"I love **RADIOHEAD**'s *Paranoid Android*. When I hit 21 or 22 I started going back to alternative rock, Radiohead was one of those bands, I read the review for *OK Computer* where it was called 'the next game-changing album', so I wanted to investigate that. It was the first time in a long time that I had got a record and felt like I was on a musical journey – this is like our generation's *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Then there's **MUSE**'s *Stockholm Syndrome*. I gravitate to a lot of Brits who sing falsetto! The through-line from Radiohead to Muse is pretty obvious, and Muse have become my favourite band as an adult. They changed my opinion on what you could do with musical ambition. They're the heir apparent to Queen to me – they're genreless." MH

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BETTER NOISE MUSIC

Paradise Lost's guitarist and resident Dark Lord on mortality, mental health and hair metal insults

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER • PICTURES: ANNE C SWALLOW

AS A FOUNDER member of Paradise Lost, guitarist Greg Mackintosh has overseen the band's journey from playing tiny clubs through becoming doom-death pioneers and major label stars-in-waiting to electro-infused renegades, before arriving at their rightful place as a true institution in the metal world. Not surprisingly, Greg has a lifetime's worth of hindsight to offer on why you should stick to your guns, and why you sometimes need to change the ammunition.

DON'T TAKE EVERYTHING TOO SERIOUSLY

"If I could tell my younger self something, it would be to enjoy yourself, relax, not be so serious, and just take it as it comes, because when you're young, you take yourself too seriously. I was the serious one of the band and I just made it all a pain for myself. Everything was hard work, and it shouldn't have been. I did have a kid when I was quite young, so I was constantly torturing myself about not being at home. Even my wife at the time was just like, 'Relax, lighten up!' And that's what I wish I had done, because for the last 10 years, it's just being plain sailing. All I had to do was relax a little bit and not take myself so seriously."

DON'T TAKE FORTUNE FOR GRANTED

"We spent all this money on EMI. We ended up owing them a million pounds, and they just wrote it off. But it was such debauchery. It was actually a lot of fun, because they didn't keep tabs on us. It was at the peak end of when all the money was in the business, right before Napster and all that. They were just throwing money around. We did press trips and everywhere was first class flights and five-star hotels. We knew we were running out of carpet there, and then right towards the end of being on EMI, they got wise to it and started trying to control everything we did. In the end it was just the biggest comedown ever and made me think I'd taken it all for granted, and it's something to be relished, because it doesn't last as long as you think."

BE TRUE TO YOURSELF

"Try not to follow scenes too much, because you see them come and go. Especially when we've done the festival circuit over the years, we saw the funk metal thing come and go, the industrial metal thing come and go, bands who were headliners one year were bottom of the bill the next year. We've always floated around two thirds up the bill, and that's fine by me. So I'd say stick to your guns and don't try to blend in with the scene just to gain that audience."

IMPERFECTION IS CREATIVE

"The UK scene was born out of a love of underground music and tape trading, but also the abilities of the people and the gear. If you had a shit amp, that became the sound of the band. If the drummer couldn't play blastbeats, you were a doom band. It was that simple. There was something really honest about that, especially in that UK scene at the time. No one knew there were genres that were going to come out left, right and centre out of it – everyone thought, 'Oh, they're doing their thing.' When we used to play with Napalm Death, we'd get people shouting, 'Play faster!', but that was because we were technically challenged, so we'd just play slower. That ended up being the style of the band almost."

BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS

"I think you can really hear where some bands come from in their music. Some of the German thrash metal bands, you can tell what area of Germany they're from – the mining areas, or whatever. You wouldn't necessarily draw comparisons between us and New Model Army, but we're not that dissimilar in the feel of what it's about. I always think of a song like *The Green And The Grey* by New Model Army, it's all about the dark Satanic mills, the green rolling hills and working class experience. That was very important to that UK scene, because it was about struggle. No one could afford any gear, everyone borrowed everyone else's gear. Everyone was from quite a dire situation, but it made it all that much more fun, where you got together and got a real sense of community."

"I WAS IN THERAPY FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS"

DON'T BE A STRANGER

"Spend more time with parents and family when you have the time, instead of taking it for granted. I was touring South America in 2018 and I got a call to say my mother had fallen ill. But she was fine when I talked to her on the phone the day before, so we got there on a flight, within five hours, but before we landed in England, she was dead. It was one of those things, there's nothing I could have done about it, but in the weeks leading up to that I was, she was asking, can I come and visit, and I'd say, I'm doing this or doing that. You make your excuses, and it's not regret, because people have a life to live, it's just one of those things where you think I should make time for people, even when you think you've got stuff on, otherwise it's totally too late."

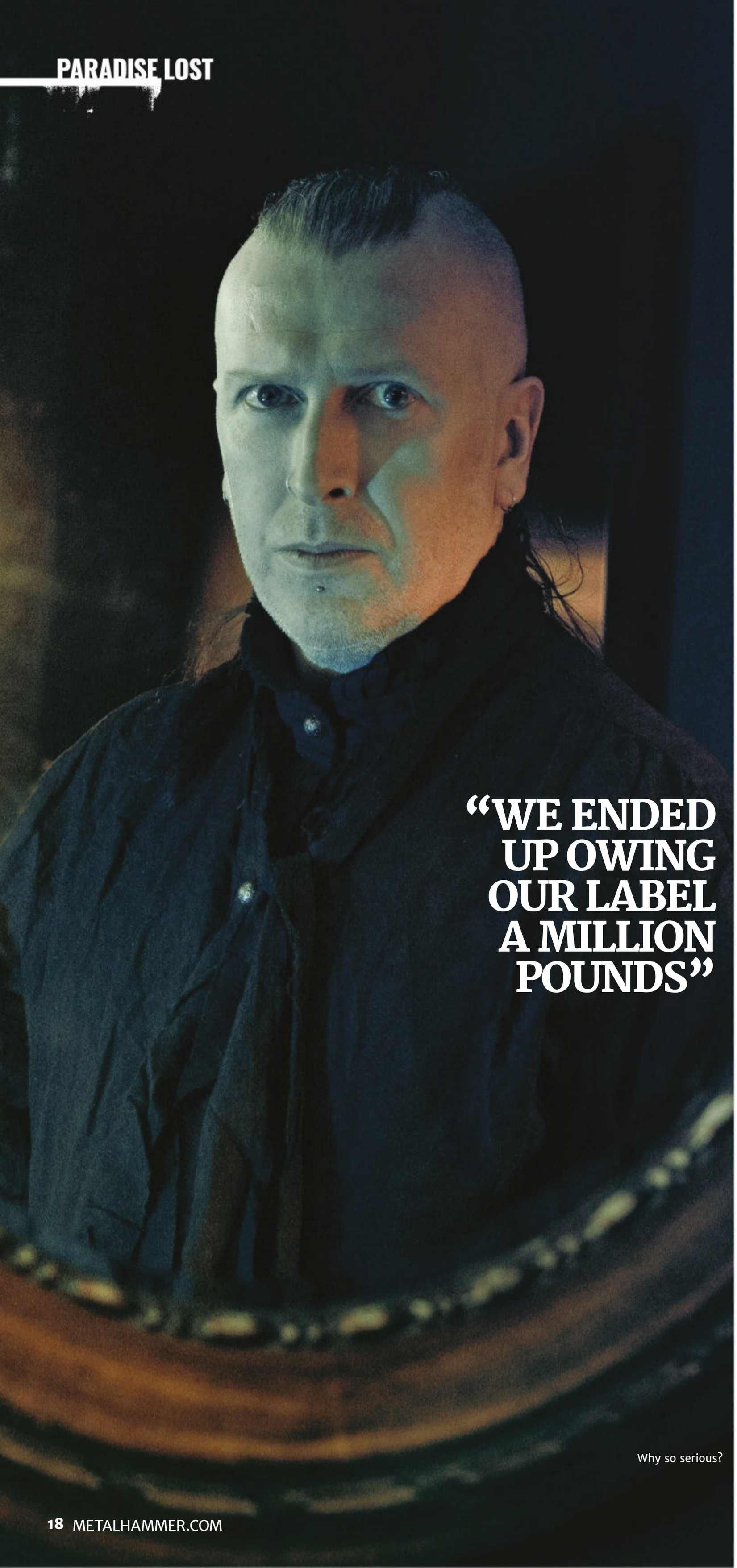
ONLY THE PRESENT IS REAL

"There is a history in the family of depression, but I found the best thing that helps is just getting through the 24 hours that you are in. I was in therapy for a couple of years, and it helped me to think about myself from a third-person point of view – what people might see when you are doing certain things. That's when I came to the realisation that I was too serious. It's about making yourself happy first and foremost, and then other people could slot in with that. There's no point being angry about things you can't realistically change anyway."

WE ALL NEED TO LISTEN

"I wasn't that empathetic when I was younger. I didn't listen to others' opinions too much. Not that you should let others' opinions influence you too much, but you should let everybody finish their conversation. But there is this thing at the moment where you are either a gammon or a snowflake. I guess I'm somewhere in the middle. I'm shades of grey. I don't like the hugely divisive arguments that are going around now, where everything takes on some huge world importance. I think the older I get, the more I'm just not wanting to ▶

Greg says he's shades of grey.
Or sepia, in this case



Why so serious?

hear all this anger and division. I want everyone to finish their conversations, I want everyone's opinions to be heard, and it's stopping me wanting to be involved in the wider conversation. It's made me want to be blinkered, and I don't want to be like that."

REACTION GETS YOU OUT OF A RUT

"We recorded and toured *Icon* and *Draconian Times* with no break, and it just became a bit much and a bit samey. That's why the change came with [PL's electronic-influenced 1997 album] *One Second*, because we started to feel like we were working on a production line. It was hard to keep the spontaneity. Then there were headlines like, 'Is this the new Metallica?', which is far too much pressure to be put on anyone – and false. Another headline that had me and Nick [Holmes, vocalist] on the front, said 'Hair metal'. We both had big, bushy hair, and we were like, 'Christ, this is really not what we got into it for.' So bringing electronics was kind of a backlash to it all, as well as boredom. We thought, 'What can we do to distance ourselves from this?' It was almost like shooting ourselves in the foot, but we knew what we were doing, we just wanted to do something different. I think that's a natural thing to do if you feel like you've been pushed into a corner."

IT'S OK TO CROSS GENRES

"*One Second* and *Host* polarised opinion, but they've actually sold really well. It's great that the metal community now seems to have embraced those albums. I stand by them completely, though, and the reason I think it's been accepted by the metal community now is down to how the music scene has moved on. Certain things have become more acceptable after we did *Host*. You wouldn't have necessarily got a metalhead listening to Perturbator in the early 2000s, but it's perfectly acceptable to mix the two now, or to do an album of that kind of stuff. But at the time, it wasn't the done thing for a metal band on the rise."

THE SPIRIT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE STYLE

"That's essentially why [Celtic Frost's critically reviled] *Cold Lake* isn't accepted these days, and *Host* is. *Host* is still miserable. The spirit in which something is done is important, because you get bands like Wolves In The Throne Room, Ulver and Sólstafir, who have done very diverse things while keeping their fans onboard. So there are bands trying to turn it around, and there are certain sections of the scene that will accept it. At the same time, there's a huge swathe of mainstream metal that's all trying to do the same thing, which can be a little bit boring. You've got to have light and shade, and bands willing to find and expand their own sound."

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IN THE STUDIO

ZEAL & ARDOR

Harsh noise, speculative sci-fi and grim, dark horror? Manuel Gagneux has got 'em covered on album number three

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS • PICTURE: MATTHIAS WILLI

Manuel: anger on tap

ZEAL & ARDOR'S first two albums, 2016's *Devil Is Fine* and 2018's *Stranger Fruit*, were genuine game-changers. Merging gospel, Southern blues and slave chants with raging black metal, mastermind Manuel Gagneux created a wholly unique and morbidly exhilarating alchemy. At the tail end of 2020, he and Z&A drummer Marc Obrist headed into their custom-built studio to create the band's third, self-titled album and, as Manuel reveals, it's their heaviest yet.

What does the new record sound like?
"It sounds like what I wanted Zeal & Ardor to sound like from the beginning. This is the answer that every fucking band says about every album, but we've experimented a lot in the last couple of releases and we've arrived in a corner that I feel very happy to be in."

How did you always want the band to sound?
"What's really important to me is atmosphere. Also, it's concise and homogenic. The last albums were eclectic, like, 'Here's a metal piece, here's some electronic shit…'. Now it's more of a smooth ride."

What was an average day in the studio like?
"I'd get up at 8am and I'd have a lot of time to listen to music and think about stuff until I arrived at the studio an hour later. Then we'd just drink a bunch of coffee and shoot the shit. If you're having a hard time in the studio, it bleeds through the record. If someone had fun throughout, even if it's a very serious record, there's this levity that truly makes music more enjoyable. We had a lot of that."

THE FACTS

ALBUM:
Three

STUDIO:
Hutch Sounds Studio

PRODUCERS:
Self-produced

EXPECT:
Delta blues with a diabolical soul and a brutal black metal heart

You put out the *Wake Of A Nation* EP last year in response to the BLM movement. Does this album continue those themes?
"It's still there if you're looking for it but it's very much not the focus of it. It's a music album for people who enjoy music first and foremost."

What themes are you discussing in the lyrics?
"I like to travel a lot, walk about and get inspired by whatever, which was really hard to do in the last couple of years. So, I've been reading a lot of science fiction and grim, dark, horror stuff."

Tell us about the grim, dark, horror stuff
"I'm into short fiction and speculative fiction. A podcast called *Pseudopod* curates short stories every week. I've been getting into [Warhammer] 40,000 lore too. That's where the term 'grimdark' comes from because the stories are so bleak and nihilistic. I took a page out of 40,000, because it's about worshipping something that you shouldn't be worshipping. Everything is set in an alternate history – American slaves used Satan to rebel against their masters, so everything is an anecdote or collection of short snippets from that world."

Would you say thematically it picks up where *Stranger Fruit* left off?
"Very much so. I wrote a lot, 1,000 words a day about that world. Maybe one day you'll have a collection of short stories. In essence I just picked out snippets of that and see what sounded metal."

A thousand words a day! How big is this thing?
"It's two megabytes, like one big old Word document of sadness. But most of it is shit. I don't edit it by the way. So that's how I get away with 1,000 a day."

Do the singles so far [*Run*, *Erase* and *Bow*] give a flavour of how heavy the album is going to be?
"One might say so, yeah! There are more harsh things to come in that vein. It's funny because I'm happy with where I am, yet this is the most aggressive record we're going to put out. I don't think it's really in line with where I am in life – pretty much the opposite."

Where did all that anger come from?
"I'm trying to answer that for myself. I don't know but there's loads of it. As soon as I try to get angry, it's here."

ZEAL & ARDOR'S SELF-TITLED THIRD ALBUM IS OUT ON FEBRUARY 22

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THE STORY BEHIND

MELVINS HONEY BUCKET

Loved by Kurt Cobain and covered by Lamb Of God – how a trio of cult oddballs delivered one of the gnarliest metal anthems of the early 90s

WORDS: CONNIE GORDON • PICTURE: DAVID CORIO/GETTY

IF GRUNGE'S ALL-PERVADING success in the early 90s was a surprise, what happened next wasn't. Following the explosive rise of Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice In Chains and Soundgarden, an army of A&R executives decamped en masse to the Pacific Northwest with express orders to find the next flannel-clad superstars who could deliver a *Nevermind* or *Dirt*-sized blockbuster.

One of the more unlikely bands to get caught up in the major label trawler nets were Melvins. Between 1993 and 1996, these irreverent musical iconoclasts from the backwaters of Washington State released three albums on Atlantic Records, home of Skid Row, Dream Theater and AC/DC. The first of these, *Houdini*, was home to *Honey Bucket*, the song that would give them the closest thing they ever got to a breakthrough hit – although, in typically contrary fashion, its cross-pollination of uptempo yet complex metallic hardcore with thick, vicious riffing and odd time signatures didn't sound like anything their former underground contemporaries were producing.

"If Captain Beefheart was a metal band, it'd sound like this," says Melvins singer and guitarist Buzz Osborne of both *Honey Bucket* and his band's output generally, referencing the gravel-throated visionary behind late-60s avant-garde masterpiece *Trout Mask Replica*. "*Honey Bucket* is one of our most popular songs ever. I would have never guessed that when I wrote it. I thought it was cool, but it didn't occur to me it was going to be what it became."

Melvins had already released four full-length independent albums before Atlantic came calling, showcasing a pre-grunge doom/stoner/sludge hybrid with side orders of everything from off-kilter classic rock to sunny 60s pop. They weren't above a little mischief either: 1992's *Lysol* album resulted in a cease-and-desist order from the cleaning product company from which it took its name.

Superficially, it's not hard to understand what Atlantic saw in Melvins. Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain regularly touted them as one of his favourite bands, partly because of their maverick musical approach and partly because they had proved that it was possible to escape from the claustrophobic environs of the smalltown Northwest. The unofficial patronage of the world's most talked-about rock star was a plus point for the label. Melvins' geographical connection with the new centre of the musical universe didn't hurt either.

"At that point, left-of-centre bands were getting signed because Nirvana and Soundgarden were selling tons of records," says Buzz. "The labels didn't know what was going to work – five minutes ago they were pushing hair metal – but because they're in the business of making money, they'd sign 15-20 bands and hope a couple of them sold millions of records. We got caught up in that, but the difference was we didn't think we'd sell millions of records. We figured it was business as usual, that we'd do one record with Atlantic and move on."

The major label deal didn't make Buzz and drummer Dale Crover overnight millionaires, but it did give them breathing space. Rather than simply hole up in a cramped studio for a week and emerge with a record, it meant they could spend slightly longer working on their first album for their new paymasters and generally mix it up.

Houdini was recorded over the course of a princely 20 days, in four different studios, with an array of producers, engineers and guest musicians. Regular bassist Lori 'Lorax' Black – daughter of 1930s child star Shirley Temple, no less – was largely out of action due to substance abuse issues that made her position in the band precarious, so Buzz and Dale played most of the bass on the album themselves, with Blessing The Hogs guitarist/vocalist Billy Anderson pitching in on a couple of tracks.

"Lori Black played on a couple songs, but I can't remember which ones," says Buzz. "Billy did some, but regardless of what the credits say, most of it was either me or Dale playing bass. *Houdini*'s credits are dubious at best; there's definitely some fiction in there."

The most significant piece of fiction in *Houdini*'s credits list pertains to the involvement of their friend Kurt Cobain, who is listed as one of the album's producers. Kurt was initially brought onboard to listen to the songs – most of which were written well before the band signed to Atlantic – and generally offer an extra pair of ears with regard to the arrangements. Things started well enough, but they soon devolved into an unproductive mess as the Nirvana singer's drug use began to get in the way, grating on the teetotal Buzz's nerves. The Melvins frontman found himself in the position of having to can one of the most famous musicians in the world from the project.

"During the last part of him being there, he was a mess, drug-wise," says Buzz. "I went to Atlantic and said I couldn't make it work with him. I had no interest in going public with Kurt's problems – I didn't feel it was anybody's business. I just wanted him off the project and that's when we got [Rage Against The Machine producer] GGGarth Richardson."

Even amid the monolithic riffage and convention-flouting musical excursions that make up *Houdini*, *Honey Bucket* stands out. In just

THE FACTS

RELEASED: 1993

ALBUM: *Houdini*

PERSONNEL: Buzz Osborne (guitar/vocals/bass), Dale Crover (drums/bass)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: No.29 (US Billboard Heatseekers Chart)

Melvins (left to right): Dale Crover, Buzz Osborne, Lori 'Lorax' Black

"WE DIDN'T THINK WE'D SELL MILLIONS OF RECORDS"

"Look, Ma! No hands!"

"I WANTED KURT OFF THE PROJECT"

three minutes and one second, it manages to unite the worlds of thrash, twisted punk, and even high-energy blues rock. Typically, it also ditched straight verse-chorus-verse structure for two distinct sections – the first part of the song is a heads-down blast of breezeblock noise and odd time signatures, while the second part draws on a more unlikely source.

"The second riff is something I always liked: riffage with an almost funky back beat, which is what ZZ Top are like at their best – always having an impenetrable groove that has more swing, is undeniably good and massively sexy," says Buzz. "That second riff is what sells it. That riff is so good, one of the best I've ever written."

Exactly what *Honey Bucket* is about is anyone's guess, though. Stream of consciousness lyrics such as *'Eight times I fell a foe fi / Like overcast and clean / I gotta motor felt the wheel / Real fashion peel'* are as much of an enigma now as they were then, and Buzz remains non-committal when it comes to the subject matter.

It may have lacked the anthemic lyrical rallying cry of *Smells Like Teen Spirit* or *Jesus Christ Pose*, but that didn't stop Atlantic from releasing *Honey Bucket* as the album's first single. This attempt to introduce Melvins to the broader public was accompanied by a video which brought the band's absurdist bent to the fore, as Buzz, a Speedos-clad-and-cowboy-booted Dale Crover and new bassist Mark Deutrom performed on a farm before a captive audience of goats, sheep, lasso-wielding cowgirls and a dude in a Mountie's uniform.

"That was a buddy of ours who's now dead, Bill Bartell, who also played lead guitar on the cover of Kiss's *Going Blind* [also on *Houdini*]," says Buzz. "He said, 'Hey, I have a Mountie suit!' And it was like, 'Great!' The cowgirls were friends of my wife who happened to own horses, so they brought them. The director picked out the farm and it was a very cheap video to make. I never had any faith in videos. They didn't interest me because it wasn't what I wanted to do, but it was fun."

It's a stretch to say that *Honey Bucket* turned Melvins into Nirvana-sized stars, but it did help put this trio of oddballs onto the edge of mainstream radar, reaching No.29 on the Billboard Heatseekers chart and helping *Houdini* shift 100,000 copies out of the gate. Echoes of its furious, staccato energy can be heard in the jagged, jarring roar of early Mastodon and High On Fire, two bands who have cited Melvins as an influence. Dillinger Escape Plan and Lamb Of God went a step further, recording covers of *Honey Bucket* (Lamb Of God's version appeared on 2018's *Legion: XX*, under their original name Burn The Priest).

The success of *Honey Bucket* and *Houdini* unexpectedly helped extend Melvins' stay on Atlantic much longer than anyone expected, with the label releasing two more studio albums, 1994's *Stoner Witch* and 1996's *Stag*. "No one was more surprised than us that we did three albums on a major label," says Buzz with a laugh.

Today, the track remains one of the band's best-known songs, appearing on various Essential Sludge and Best Grunge playlists. Where some other bands might see their biggest 'hit' as unwanted baggage, Melvins have no such issues. *Honey Bucket* is still a staple of their live shows – they even recorded an unplugged version for upcoming acoustic album *Five Legged Dog*.

"I don't know what it is about it over any of our other songs, but we played it live for a long time, then we didn't, but we kept getting requests," says Buzz. "Now, we'll just play it and we'll play it from now on. It's a good song and we're not going to deny its popularity just to be jerks."

MELVINS' NEW ALBUM, *FIVE LEGGED DOG*, IS OUT NOW VIA IPECAC

DAVID CORIO/GETTY

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Jimmy Page after seeing The Circus of Horrors & The Damned at London Palladium

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NEW NOISE

SEEYOUSPACE-COWBOY

Addiction, darkness, humour and hope – San Diego “sasscore” livewires are bringing chaos to their catharsis

WORDS: ROSIE SOLOMON • PICTURE: KRISSY MARIE

Survival mode has a new soundtrack

TWO WEEKS AFTER

SeeYouSpaceCowboy finished recording their new album, *The Romance Of Affliction*, frontwoman and lyricist Connie Sgarbossa overdosed and almost died.

It was the culmination of years of addiction, despair and grief, after the death by suicide of her girlfriend left her “in survival mode”. If the San Diego band’s 2019 debut album, *The Correlation Between Entrance And Exit Wounds* – written in the wake of that tragic event – was an open wound, fresh in the aftermath of loss, *The Romance Of Affliction* is a dissection, a deeper, more curious and more analytical look at the hurdles Connie has faced over the last two years.

“[The overdose] became the perfect example of why I wrote this album,” says Connie, who is reluctant to go into specific details of it specifically, or her addiction in general. “It isn’t about triumph over adversity. There is no happy ending yet.”

Forgoing the more straight-up metalcore of its predecessor, *The Romance Of Affliction* is more ambitious and ambiguous, mirroring Connie’s multifaceted experience of addiction, recovery and relapse. “This album was my own little catharsis,” says Connie, “but I hope people can take away that it’s OK – shit happens, and it’s messy but you just gotta keep working on it.”

It was this determination and straight-talking approach that prompted Connie to form SeeYouSpaceCowboy in 2016 along with drummer-turned-guitarist brother Ethan and original bassist Taylor Allen. A handful of singles and EPs together with their debut album positioned them as an exciting new voice on the underground scene and pitched Connie as an invaluable voice for the queer community.

But while SeeYouSpaceCowboy’s music has evolved into a meticulous balancing act of intensity, irresistible melody and unbridled chaos – they call it “Sasscore” – the singer’s unflinchingly honest lyricism keeps it all grounded in a reality that can be brutally bleak and cathartic in equal measure. “My brain tells me multiple times a day to kill myself,” Connie says candidly. ‘But I just keep touring, I keep creating.”

While the nature of her lyrics offers a beacon for those marginalised people who face similar struggles, the new album finds humour within the darkness. “When we wrote *The Correlation...*, it was dark and depressing, which worked at the time,” says Connie. “But that’s not an accurate representation of me now. I’m more satirical and cynical. I like to bring in humour and ridiculous, heavy breakdowns in these dark songs.”

There have been major line-up changes between the two albums, with their old bassist and guitarist leaving (they were rejoined in 2020 by Taylor Allen, who had departed three years earlier, plus drummer AJ Tartol). But these personnel upheavals turned out to be a blessing in disguise, opening up new avenues for SeeYouSpaceCowboy

“It felt like a new band,” says Connie. “Our main songwriter left, so we didn’t feel pressured, because we weren’t trying to live up to what we did before. We wanted to do something different. It felt more like growing pains.”

STILL, “GROWING PAINS”

were the least of the shake ups in the two years between albums. Whilst *The Correlation...* dealt with the immediate grief of the death of Connie’s partner, *The Romance Of Affliction* deals with a much longer-

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE: Effortlessly eclectic metalcore that never fails to surprise and satisfy

FOR FANS OF: Sharptooth, Knocked Loose, At The Drive-In

CHECK OUT: *Anything To Take Me Anywhere But Here*

term fallout. Connie's lyrics have never shied away from difficult topics, but the new album is stark in its portrayal of grief, addiction and relapse: the jarring roar of *Anything To Take Me Anywhere But Here* is an out-of-control depiction of drug abuse punctuated by screams, laughter and disorientating jazzy sections.

"Originally, my whole idea for this record was going to be 'exit wounds', with *The Correlation...* being 'entrance wounds'," says Connie. "I was thinking I would write about how everything's better and this is how I conquered all. But I'm not better. It felt ingenuine for me to write a record that was a grandiose statement about healing. I tried to write those 'it gets better songs' and it's just not what's on my mind. What's on my mind is how I've been in survival mode for two years since my life got turned upside down."

If the past has been dark for Connie, the future looks bright for SeeYouSpaceCowboy, especially now they can connect with their fanbase in a live setting again. "Every show we've played, since live music came back, has been our craziest show in that area," she says. "You worry that people are going to forget about you over the pandemic – but we're playing shows that are wilder than before everything shut down!"

And despite the many personal challenges she's faced along the way, Connie isn't planning on giving up any time soon. "Even when everything is terrible, I still find time to laugh at it. Life has no meaning and it's fucking absurd that we exist. I think of it like a shark – they have to swim in order to breathe. Whilst I have the capabilities, I will just keep going."

"SHIT HAPPENS, BUT YOU GOTTA KEEP WORKING ON IT"

***THE ROMANCE OF AFFLICTION* IS OUT NOW VIA PURE NOISE RECORDS**

NEW NOISE

PORTRAYAL OF GUILT

Blasphemy, sado-masochism and jump-scares? All in day's work for these filthy US extremists

WORDS: CHRISTINA WENIG

PORTRAYAL OF GUILT singer and guitarist Matt King insists the title of his band's latest album, *Christfucker*, was never meant to be offensive. "We just needed a title that was psychotic enough to go with the album sound," he says with a smirk, knowing full well that it's bound to piss some people off.

'Psychotic' is an appropriate description. *Christfucker* is an aural assault drenched in filth, dissonance and violent loudness. Originating in the realms of screamo, the Austin, Texas trio – completed by drummer James Beveridge and bassist Alex Stanfield – have expanded their horizons to take in extreme metal. The resulting sonic vileness sounds like the stuff nightmares are made of – and it does so by design.

"We wanted the album to sound like it came from hell," Matt says of the band's approach of creating music in the vein of slasher flicks. "Imagine watching a horror movie and all of a sudden, there's a jump scare or the volume gets really loud and unbearable. That's what we're trying to do with the music." His lyrics about human sacrifice and sado-masochism vividly illustrate these gory scenes: *'Steel to my bones like a hammer to a nail / A euphoric pain / Torture me the right way'*, he screeches in *The Crucifixion*.

Christfucker comes out only 10 months after the release of the trio's second full-length, *We Are Always Alone*, just by virtue of trying to make the best of the pandemic situation. Their stylistic development simply happened along the way. "We go with whatever we're feeling, which is why all our albums sound different," Matt explains. "Hopefully, we have a core that'll always sound a specific way – like when you listen to Converge, you know it's them."

Portrayal Of Guilt have even bigger ambitions: They want to push their extreme sound into the mainstream, without making compromises.

"I remember when I was about eight and Korn, which is pretty much my favourite band, had the biggest album of that time," Matt reminisces. "Seeing that happen, I know it can happen again." H

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Being sucked into the abyss by a maelstrom of noisy blackened screamo

FOR FANS OF:
Full Of Hell, Code Orange, Cult Leader

CHECK OUT:
Sadist

***CHRISTFUCKER* IS OUT NOW VIA RUN FOR COVER**

THE ANSWER LIES IN THE BLACK VOID

The doom double-team proving misery does love company

WORDS: RICH HOBSON • PICTURES: MIKE REDMAN

THE ANSWER LIES In The Black Void aren't interested in escapism. Wearing tragedy and despair like a warm blanket against the outside the world, the doom metal band's philosophy of facing their demons head-on is pointed out plainly in their name. "Doom feels like home to me," admits founder Martina Horváth. "It's where I can put more of myself into the music than anywhere else, without compromise."

Decidedly removed from Martina's other job as songwriter and vocalist for black metal experimentalists Thy Catafalque, The Answer Lies In The Black Void formed in 2020 as a creative partnership between Martina and multi-instrumentalist Jason Köhnen (Bong-Ra). The pair initially collaborated in the group Mansur, but soon found their shared love of doom demanded an outlet of its own. "Our inspirations aren't just in the kind of music we wanted to make, but in the emotions we wanted to tackle," Jason explains.

Equal parts melancholia and ethereal beauty, The Answer Lies In The Black Void drew on doom's greats as a foundational sonic blueprint. Citing Cathedral's *Forest Of Equilibrium* and My Dying Bride's *Dreadful Hours* as influences whilst also namechecking Crowbar, Saint Vitus and Trees Of Eternity, the band's debut *Forlorn* serves as a distillation of doom metal's history whilst embracing the genre's contemporary champions. "There's a full range," Jason says. "We go from the hopeful to the hopelessly miserable, classic-style funeral doom out to industrial-type stuff. We wanted to leave ourselves plenty of options for future albums." H

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Funereal despair amidst gothic grandeur and swelling strings

FOR FANS OF:
Chelsea Wolfe, King Woman, My Dying Bride

CHECK OUT:
Become Undone

***FORLORN* IS OUT NOW VIA BURNING WORLD RECORDS**

PORTAYAL OF GUILT: PRESS.

SLOWCRUSH

Beauty and intensity collide with Amenra-worshipping Belgians

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL • PICTURES: KAT DE LAET

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Late 80s indie rock, early 90s grunge and 00s metallic hardcore having a big group hug

FFO:
Holy Fawn, King Woman, My Bloody Valentine

CHECK OUT:
Swoon

"I'M NOT ALWAYS so good at explaining what we are, but we can be intensely… nice," says Slowcrush bassist and vocalist Isa Holliday with a laugh. "Those dynamics of taking an emotion, any emotion from anger to adulation, and being incredibly intense about it are what brings the heaviness to our music."

Slowcrush are very much a heavy band, but they're a very sonically pretty one too. The Belgian quartet's second album, *Hush*, sees lilting elegant passages of warm, shoegaze-adjacent rock intertwine with huge, hulking riffs and doomy, battering drum rhythms. It's a wonderfully dynamic record.

"We all grew up playing in hardcore and doom bands," Isa continues. "Now we incorporate a lot of different sounds. I guess we could be perceived as being something dreamier and more ethereal, whilst also having these very harsher and heavier undertones. The combination of darkness and light is a balance we always look to achieve."

Isa cites the current crop of underground Belgian bands, such as Amenra, Oathbreaker and all their various offshoots, as integral in inspiring the sonic leaps Slowcrush have made.

"Seeing something like [Amenra's] The Church Of Ra sprouting up is very motivating," she says. "Coming from a small country like Belgium and seeing it being admired all across the globe feels special. Before I felt like bands from smaller countries could be easily dismissed, but this gives us hope."

***HUSH* IS OUT NOW ON CHURCH ROAD RECORDS**

SPIRITWORLD

If Clint Eastwood had a metallic hardcore band, it would sound something like this

WORDS: DOM LAWSON • PICTURES: SEAN JORG

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
A fistful of vicious, thrashy hardcore riffs (and a few riffs more)

FOR FANS OF:
Integrity, Slayer, Power Trip

CHECK OUT:
The Bringer Of Light

ERUPTING FROM THE dusty depths of Nevada, Spiritworld are self-proclaimed purveyors of 'death western': vicious and deathly hardcore with an eerie edge ripped straight from a Sergio Leone movie. According to band mastermind Stu Folsom, new album *Pagan Rhythms* is just the start of a grand and gruesome creative quest.

"For this record I used all the best, leanest parts of what I like. There's no filler. No wanky solos. It's just super-aggressive. There's an apocalyptic, dark and heavy tone to what we do. I guess that resonates with people right now."

Spiritworld's warped take on the cowboy genre can be seen in all its bloody gory in the video for single *The Bringer Of Light*. A brutal spaghetti western in miniature, its soundtrack of hell-for-leather, Slayer-ised hardcore has a palpable runaway train feel: the sound of humanity hurtling into the fires of Hell. For Stu, it's just the start.

"I have a book and I'm working on a screenplay," he says. "I want to blend westerns with horror, fiction writing and the musical side too. That's 'death western'. When I can convince someone to give me a chunk of money, I'm gonna make horror western movies."

***PAGAN RHYTHMS* IS OUT ON NOV 5 VIA CENTURY MEDIA**

BRANN: PRESS/CLAY PATRICK MCBRIDE

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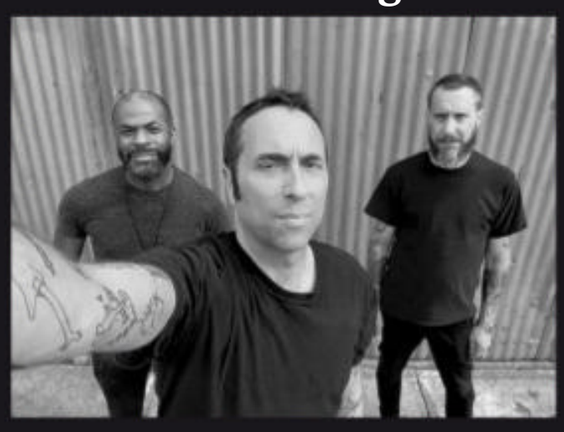
What your favourite bands are listening to



NETHERLANDS

"I can never give enough love to these guys. They are from Brooklyn, New York, and they are super-heavy. They remind me of Melvins and Big Business, Gojira a little bit, but they have really got their own thing going on, really fuzzy, garage-y and kinda twisted."

BRANN DAILOR, MASTODON

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Box sets, underground oddities and all the essential merch you need this month

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LAST YEAR, KINGS of the key change, Lordi, released *Killection*: a fictional greatest hits set that spanned a multitude of genres between the 70s and 90s. It was good. The Finnish monster rockers then heard the idiom 'too much of a good thing', opting to bury it alongside the rest of 2006's Eurovision contestants. Compiling seven – seven! – new studio albums, all packaged in this lavish *Lordiversity* lurid purple vinyl boxset alongside an accompanying booklet and slipmat, Terry Wogan's faves are genuinely testing the waters. There's a disco album. A prog album. A thrash album. It's a ludicrous idea, but with artwork as garish as this and titles including *Abusement Park* and *Spooky Sextravaganza Spectacular*, you've just got to give them credit for the scope of their world-building. Is this their *Twin Peaks*? Their *Discworld*? Absolutely not. It's Lordi.

tinyurl.com/lordi-box

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Say what you like about their fashion choices, but you can't knock Sabaton's commitment. The Swedish, history-themed power metallers now have their own strategic board game – co-created by bassist Pär Sundström!

tinyurl.com/sabaton-game

DREAM THEATER BEARD OIL

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Whenever we listen to Dream Theater, we always think, "John's beard must smell lovely." Captain Fawcett did too, given they now have their own John Petrucci Signature beard oil. It has a 'seductive musk', apparently. Woof.

tinyurl.com/dream-beard

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tinyurl.com/targaryen-coat

WHITECHAPEL BUNDLE

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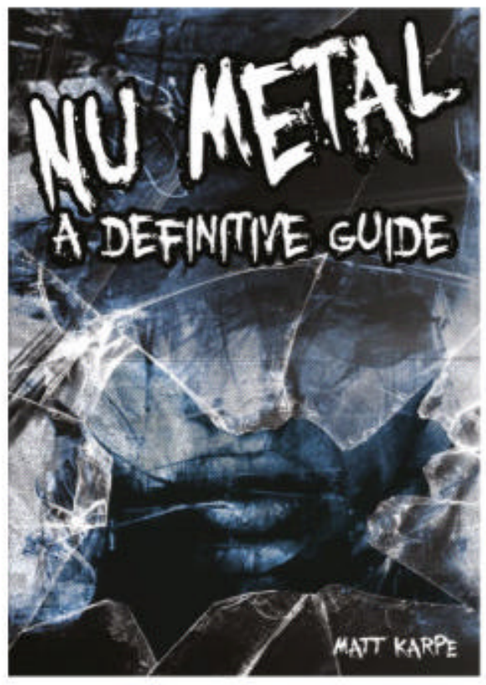
Whitechapel are offering a classy – and ultra-limited – vinyl edition of their newest album via Impericon. The tasteful black'n'gold colourway is to *die* for, and the t-shirt's riff on the album art is similarly swish.

tinyurl.com/kin-bundle



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tinyurl.com/numetal-book

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Derek Riggs' artwork was almost as important as the music on those early Maiden albums. Own a piece of big 'eaded, Pop! Rocks Eddie history, with the first four records' visages recreated in glow-in-the-dark glory.

tinyurl.com/funko-eddie

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tinyurl.com/renegade-box

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This memoir from Anthrax bassist Frank Bello – co-authored with rock scribe Joel McIver – offers plenty of Big 4 insights, but also hard-won lessons from a difficult, occasionally tragic, life.

tinyurl.com/bello-book

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tinyurl.com/sun-skulls

EXODUS BUNDLE

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Bay Area thrashers Exodus celebrated album 11 with *Persona Non Grata*, and this handy, limited-to-600 bundle includes the album on fizzy blue vinyl and a gore-slicked hoodie that'll have grandma puking out her dentures.

tinyurl.com/exodus-bundle

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40 YEARS. 40 INTERVIEWS

When you put together an issue to celebrate Metallica turning 40, you know that a quick catch-up with the band for a basic cover feature just isn't gonna cut it. So, that's not what we did. Instead, for one issue only, we stripped out our entire features section, dedicating it to all things Metallica and reaching out to 40 different people who have played a part in their amazing, genre-defining story.

In this issue you'll find everything from unpublished interviews with Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett about the creation of one of their greatest anthems, to in-depth conversations with the likes of Jason Newsted, Bob Rock and Brian Slagel – vital parts of Metallica's journey across the last four decades. You'll find legends from across the rock spectrum, from metal icons like Ozzy, Rob Halford and Kerry King, to guitar hero Joe Satriani to Misfits' own Doyle Wolfgang Von Frankenstein. We've got producers. Industry heavyweights. Managers. Journalists. We've got the therapist. We've even got Edge from WWE.

The one thing they all have in common? They've all got something to say about Metallica. Because if you love heavy metal, you've got something to say about this band. And that is why they're still here, 40 years on.

Happy birthday, Metallica. And to everyone else: enjoy the issue.

40 FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

BRIAN SLAGEL

He knew Lars before Metallica even existed, and included *Hit The Lights* on his legendary *Metal Massacre* compilation. It was the leg up that set Metallica on the path to greatness

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

PRESS/STEPHANIE CABRAL

If it wasn't for Brian Slagel, the history of Metallica might have been dramatically different. In 1982, the fanzine writer turned fledgling record label owner gave the unknown band their first big break by including them on *Metal Massacre*, a compilation album that would launch his brand new label, Metal Blade. The track they contributed, *Hit The Lights*, was jammed on the end of the album and miscredited to 'Mettallica', but it provided the spark that fired up the career of both the band and Metal Blade – both of which are still going strong today. "For them and for me to still be doing this 40 years later is just mind-blowing," says Brian, speaking to *Hammer* via Zoom from his home in Las Vegas.

For whom the pages turn: some light reading with the lads

Where does your history with Metallica begin?
"I got to know Lars through my friend John Kornarens, who had met him in the parking lot at a gig in 1980. Lars was wearing a Saxon t-shirt and nobody in LA apart from John and I knew who Saxon were. John told him, 'You should meet my friend Brian.' A couple of days later, Lars shows up at my house and we became fast friends.

This was before Metallica existed?
"Yeah, way earlier. I remember being at his house one day, and he had a drum set in the corner – not put together, just the pieces. He goes, 'I'm gonna start a band.' 'Yeah, sure, Lars, whatever…' Fast forward a little, and I'd discovered this scene in Los Angeles – there was no internet, so nobody knew this was happening. I got the idea to put together a compilation, *Metal Massacre*, as a way to get these bands out there. Then Lars called me up and said, 'Hey, if I put together a band, can I be on your compilation album?' And that, of course, ended up being Metallica."

So he put Metallica together just to be on the compilation?
"As the story goes, he and James had jammed a bit, but they couldn't really find anybody else to be in the band so nothing was happening. When the compilation came up, he called James and said, 'Hey, we can be on this record.' So they got together and reworked *Hit The Lights*, which James had from a previous band. The original recording was Lars, James playing guitar and bass, and Lloyd Grant, who was some guy they knew, playing lead. Lars literally brought the cassette tape to the studio on the final day we were mastering the album."

Had you heard the track before they delivered it?
"I had not heard any of it. The quality wasn't amazing, so I was surprised: 'Well, it's not bad at all.' It's funny, we had to bump the cassette tape up to a reel-to-reel, which cost 50 bucks.

"I DIDN'T HAVE THE $10,000 TO SIGN METALLICA"

None of the band or me had the money. Luckily, my friend John had 50 bucks to do it, otherwise Metallica might not have been on the record, and who knows what would have happened then."

When did you first see them play live?
"I missed their first show [at Radio City in Anaheim, Orange County, on March 14, 1982], but I went to the second show they ever did, which, crazily enough, was opening up for Saxon. That was the original line-up with Ron McGovney on bass and Dave Mustaine on guitar. But James wasn't playing guitar at that point, only singing, and he was super-shy – Mustaine was the one talking to the crowd."

What were your impressions of them as a live band?
"They were much better than I thought they were going to be. I wasn't, like, 'These are going to be the biggest band in the world at some point', but they were pretty good. Their set consisted of *Hit The Lights*, maybe one other original, a cover of the song *Blitzkrieg* [by the NWOBHM band Blitzkrieg] and a bunch of Diamond Head covers. I remember the person who was doing the sound played a Diamond Head song and Lars runs up, freaking out, saying: 'We gotta get this tape off! We're playing this song later and we don't want anybody to know that it's not one of ours!'"

Where did Metallica fit in the LA scene?
"They didn't fit in at all. All the promoters thought they were a punk band – they didn't fit in with the Mötley Crües and the Ratts and that world. They played quite a bit in Orange County [south of Los Angeles], which was a bit more into the heavier stuff, but they really couldn't find an audience in Los Angeles. I did this Metal Massacre show up in San Francisco and a band dropped out, so I asked Lars, 'Hey, you guys wanna come up and play?, and he said, 'Sure.' I was aware of the scene up there, with bands like Exodus, but I was just floored when Metallica came out and there were 250 kids in jeans and jackets, going crazy. You never saw that in LA."

COURTESY OF BRIAN SLAGEL.

New bassist? Nice try, Brian...

How had those kids even heard about them?
"Tape trading. There were all these guys up in San Francisco, like Ron Quintana and Brian Lew – guys who are still around today – who were tape traders and got the word out. Ron had a fanzine and a radio show on the local university station, and he had played them on that. So these kids knew who the band were before they ever got there, which was crazy."

Slayer were coming through at the same time. Was there a scene coalescing around the two bands?
"No, Metallica and Slayer were never very close. They were competitive. I was friends with both bands, and Metallica would ask me, 'What are Slayer doing? What are they writing?' And the Slayer guys would ask me, 'What are Metallica doing?' It was, 'Who's faster? Who's heavier?' They actually played together early on in Orange County. It was really early in Slayer's career – it was probably only the second or third gig they had played. I'd forgotten about it until someone put a flyer online. I mean, what a gig to forget about! Ha ha ha!"

You also played a part in hooking them up with Cliff Burton. How did that happen?
"Cliff was in a band called Trauma from San Francisco, who were on *Metal Massacre II*. They came down to play a show at the Troubadour in Los Angeles and I went to see them. The band was OK, but the bass player was unbelievable – blue bell-bottom jeans, denim jacket, hair flowing, headbanging the whole gig. About a month later, Lars calls me and says, 'Hey, we love Ron, but we want to get a better bass player. Do you know anybody?' Trauma were coming back to LA in a couple of weeks, so I said, 'You should see them – their bass player is incredible.' So we go to the show, and within five or 10 minutes Lars says, 'That guy is going to be in our band.' Sure enough, a month or two later, Cliff's in the band and they're moving to San Francisco.

Was that original line-up really not built to last?
"Dave Mustaine was a phenomenal guitar player, but when he'd have too much to drink, he'd change a little bit. He wasn't the fun-loving Dave that everybody knew. I could see where that could potentially be a problem, especially after seeing them and hanging out with them later on. It was really Lars and James's band, but Mustaine was in there too – it was a three-headed monster in terms of who was running the show."

The $64,000 question: why didn't you sign them to Metal Blade?
"I just had no money. Lars came to me and said, 'Hey we've got an opportunity to do a record for $10,000, do you want to do it?' And I said, 'Sure, but where am I going to get $10,000? I don't even have $1,000.' With the first Slayer album, Kerry [King]'s parents and Tom [Araya] financed it, but the Metallica guys just didn't have enough money to get it done, and neither did I."

Do you ever wonder how things would have turned out if you'd managed to scrape together that $10,000?
"Not really. Look, I'm happy I played my little role in their thing, and they've been unbelievably kind to me over the years talking about that. But I've had an unbelievable career anyway – I've worked with a million amazing bands, and I'm still doing it 40 years later. Money stuff, I don't care about. I played my role in their story, and I don't have any regrets. It all worked out the way it was supposed to for both of us."

How are Lars and James different today to the kids you met 40-odd years ago?
"Lars hasn't changed a whole lot. When we hang out, we revert back to being those teenage kids. James has definitely changed a lot – the first time I met him, he might have said three words, he was so shy. But as time's gone on, he's become a completely different guy – extremely intelligent, unbelievably friendly, always thanking me for the little part I played in Metallica history."

All those years ago, did you ever think we'd still be talking about Metallica 40 years down the line?
"Never. No way in hell. I had a funny moment with Lars when they were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame [in 2009]. They had this big party, and it was in the wee hours and it had dwindled right down, and Lars and I were talking. And he looked at me and said, 'Can you fucking believe this all happened?' And it's like, no, absolutely not, it's just crazy."

COURTESY OF BRIAN SLAGEL.

BANGERS AND THRASH

San Francisco's Bay Area was a hotbed of glam metal. Then Metallica moved in. Testament's Chuck Billy and Exodus's Gary Holt remember the parties and punches of the thrash revolution

WORDS: JOE DALY

Exodus's Rick Hunolt and Gary Holt having a blast onstage in the 80s

Musical revolutions are not born in a vacuum. Virtually every established genre can be traced back to a place where, for a fleeting moment in time, the universe permitted the perfect conditions for something truly special to occur. When Metallica left Los Angeles for San Francisco in 1983, they brought some pretty big dreams with them, but they could never have foreseen that they were about to create an entire scene, inspire a new genre and change the face of heavy metal forever.

Today when people speak of the 'Bay Area scene', they're invariably referring to the rise of thrash in San Francisco in the mid 80s. Before then, Testament frontman Chuck Billy explains, San Francisco was a hair metal stronghold. "Pretty much that's all it was in the early-to-mid 80s," he explains. "A lot of spandex and hair bands."

Much like LA a few hours south, San Francisco also boasted a vibrant punk scene. There was no crossover between the punk and metal camps – you stayed within your scene. It was Metallica who finally united metalheads and punks under the banner of a pulverising new sound that harnessed punk's revved-up velocity in tandem with the heaviness and aggression of metal. It was not a compromise between the camps but a violent declaration of war that challenged fans to join or be trampled.

By the time Metallica arrived in the Bay Area, a local band called Exodus had already planted the seeds of thrash with the fiery, twin-fretted menace of band co-founder Kirk Hammett and his buddy Gary Holt. Destiny set the bands on a collision course and a scene was born. "We played a couple of

so-called clubs," says Gary, "but the first real club we ever played was the Old Waldorf and that's where we met Metallica. We felt like we were staring into the mirror – two bands playing such similar styles of music. We hit it off right away. You know the rest."

Ground zero for the Bay Area scene – at least after hours – was the infamous 'Metallica House' in Richmond, where the band threw epic, post-gig parties renowned for their cacophonous volume and matchless depravity. Critically, these over-the-top beer blasts became the crucible in which the new metal community was forged. "People would see this awesome band," says Chuck, "and everybody who was following them was always at these parties. It got people exposed to the music scene and really built the community."

That the structure even survived remains something of a miracle. "There were a lot of house-destroying activities," Gary says with a chuckle. "I remember after the Raven and Metallica tour date in Berkeley, which Exodus played as well, we went back to the Metallica house and 'Wacko' Rob Hunter from Raven broke his hand punching somebody – while on tour – and the party just devolved into absolute madness. Think *Animal House* times a thousand."

Unsurprisingly, a second wave of Bay Area thrash bands arrived quickly. "At the beginning, it was us and Metallica," says Gary. "Later, younger kids started discovering this new thing called

GARY HOLT: PRESS. CHUCK BILLY: PRESS/GENE AMBO. GETTY.

Heady times: Metallica's Cliff Burton and James Hetfield onstage in 1981

Testament's Eric Peterson and Chuck Billy, fitting some work in amongst the play

GETTY.

"IT WAS ABOUT ATTITUDE AND ALCOHOL"

CHUCK BILLY

thrash and joined the party. You had Death Angel, who were also right there at the beginning, and later Testament and Vio-Lence, Possessed and Lääz Rockit. It was a wonderful time."

As 'thrash' entered the vernacular, these new bands were galvanised by this blistering vision of heavy metal and its party-'til-you-drop ethos. "It was attitude and alcohol," says Chuck. "It was all about drinking and having fun."

The influx of this aggressive new sound signalled the death knell for San Francisco's steadily eroding hair metal scene. "Metallica took over the Bay Area really quickly and a lot of the glam bands moved to LA," says Chuck. "When those bands left the Bay Area, it gave all of the thrash bands coming up access to the venues at that time. Suddenly, there was a lot of room for us."

And so thrash metal's coronation occurred not in a single event but throughout a steady campaign of beer-sodden, high-energy shows at places such as Ruthie's Inn, the Kabuki Theater, The Fillmore and the Old Waldorf. Metallica began snagging high-profile tours, and soon the other bands were carving out their own paths, inking record deals and building their own loyal fanbases. To this day, the Bay Area remains home to nearly all of the bands who came up in that scene in the 80s, including Metallica.

When you're in the midst of doing something new, there is no context other than the present moment. Only the passage of time can reveal the significance of an era, and for Gary, words can never conjure the buzz and vitality of those early days. "It was a time in our lives and a special time in music. A whole branch of the heavy metal tree was growing in one little spot in San Francisco. All I can say to people is, 'You wouldn't understand. You had to have been there.'"

SYLVIE SIMMONS

Lars was like a "puppy on speed" when he befriended the music journalist in the 80s

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

Sylvie and Metallica go way back

How did you meet Metallica?
"I first met Lars back when the band was just a bunch of kids playing in the garage of the house in the LA suburb where he lived with his dad. They didn't have an official name back then as far as I can remember, let alone a record deal."

Who were you writing for at the time?
"I was writing for the weekly rock paper *Sounds* under my own name and for *Kerrang!* under the pseudonym Laura Canyon. I was living in Laurel Canyon and I was writing a lot about the metal scene. Someone who seemed to be at every show was a kid named John Kornarens, or 'Heavy Metal John', as he called himself. He was a nice kid who really loved the music and had good taste. He came to my place now and then and I'd give him those 8x10 black and white photos of bands that publicists used to send out with their press releases. One day he asked if he could bring a friend. It was Lars."

What was he like back then?
"Lars was like a puppy on speed. I mean he wasn't on speed, he was just incredibly hyper. While I talked to John, Lars was talking away and rummaging through my waste paper bin digging out press releases and photos I'd thrown out and saying, 'Can I have that?' 'Can I have this?' I got him a pass to go see Motörhead play Long Beach once. I can't remember if he swayed me with his sheer love for that band, which I shared, or whether he just broke me down with all that talking! He was a Maiden fan, too – or at least one thing that caught his eye was one of those Christmas cards with Eddie on the front and he asked me for that. I think I said no."

Are you still in touch with the band?
"We've met fairly often over the years, Lars and I, but for the most part only for interviews. Sometimes when a band gets big, they either forget or deliberately distance themselves from people who were there at the start – journalists, other bands, their first record label. But not Metallica. They never forgot. When they were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame, they flew out a bunch of people from their early days to the ceremony and party. I'm happy to say I was among them."

LLOYD GRANT

Lars's jamming buddy made history when he played guitar on Metallica's first song

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

How did you end up playing with Lars Ulrich in the early 80s?
"I was a guitarist just trying to get into a good band, particularly one that would play around town, so we met through a local magazine that would put out ads for musicians looking to recruit other musicians to form bands."

What was he like?
"He was a really nice guy, very friendly, and even then he knew exactly what he wanted to do. Before Metallica became a band, Lars was still investing all of his time into eventually making music. He'd go to the record store a few times a week to see what new things were coming in from Europe, listening to them but also *studying* them."

At what point did the concept of Metallica as a band start to form?
"Metallica kind of formed on the side while Lars and I were playing together. He met tons of people and would play with them in either the rehearsal studio or his place. I do remember he brought a guy into the practice once and it was James Hetfield. They'd got a tape and it was an early instrumental version of *Hit The Lights*, but at that point there still wasn't a name for the band."

What did you think of the song, compared to the stuff that was around at the time?
"I liked it – I wish *we'd* written it! It was probably a bit faster than I was trying to write at the time, but it was right up my alley. I didn't know just how big it was gonna be so at the time it was just a cool song."

Was there a particular point you stopped playing together?
"We stopped playing around the time he started getting together regularly with James and Ron McGovney. He still approached me when it was just Lars, James and Ron to go and play with them. I went over and we went through *Hit The Lights* a couple times, which was really awesome. After that I got another call, this time to come and put down a guitar solo because they were trying to get the song onto the compilation *Metal Massacre*. They literally turned a recorder on and just got me doing a solo; if I'd known just how much interest it was going to create, I would have spent way more time on it!"

Lloyd joined the Horsemen at the Fillmore for their 30th birthday celebrations

How does it feel to be a part of the story of metal's biggest band?
"It feels super-important, my name appearing in the same breath as the story of Metallica. It's pretty interesting, but obviously at the time we couldn't predict the future, so nobody knew what was going to happen!"

COURTESY OF SYLVIE SIMMONS. COURTESY OF LLOYD GRANT. GETTY.

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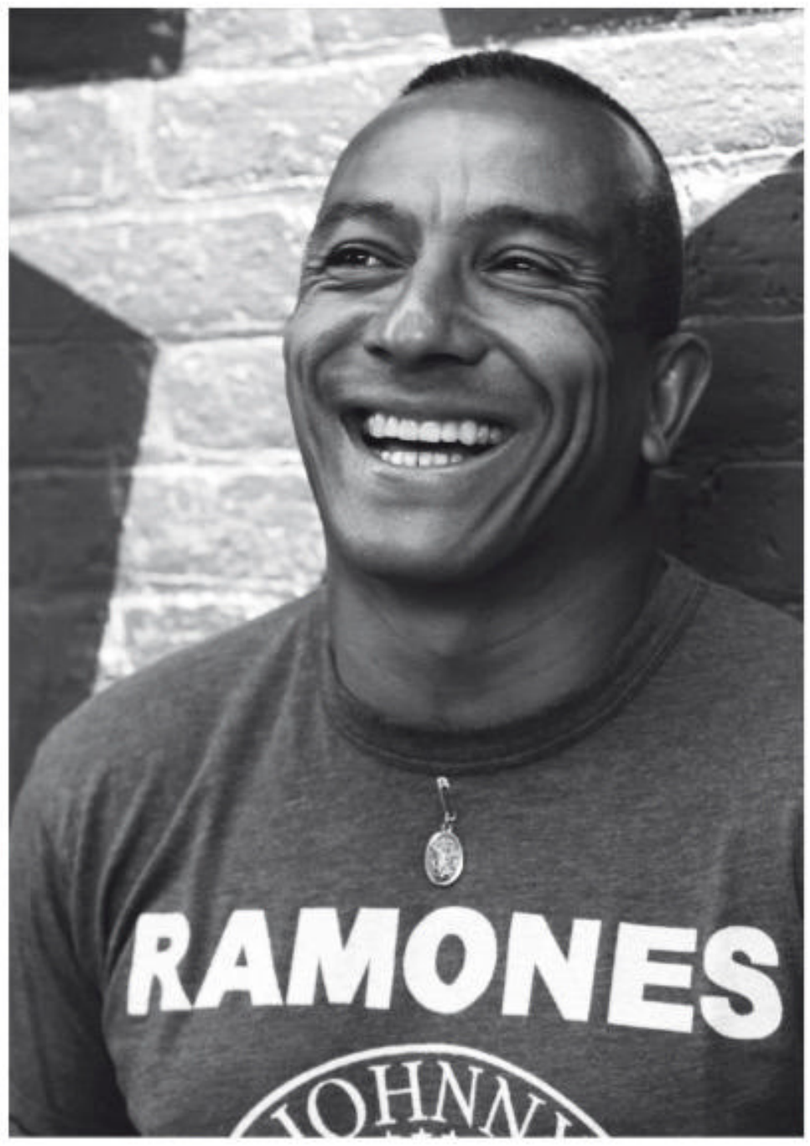
MICHAEL ALAGO

Metallica were the talk of the town, and as a young A&R man at Elektra, he was determined to sign them

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN



How did you first hear Metallica?
"Through the underground metal scene. There was a demo cassette being circulated and flyers being handed out at all the metal shows. They were becoming the talk of the town. I got to see them at L'Amour in Brooklyn in 1983 with my friend [and future Monster Magnet guitarist] Phil Caivano. Their insane, kickass performance completely blew me away."

How did you convince them to sign with Elektra?
"It didn't take much convincing. We were all young, in our early 20s, and the band knew I understood their music. They were familiar with Elektra's rich history, so the day after the Roseland concert [with Raven and Anthrax], in August 1984, I had them come to the Elektra conference room where we had Chinese food and beer. I also gave them a bunch of vinyl and cassettes, specifically the MC5, The Doors and The Stooges. It was a very exciting and joyous time."

How did you find out that Cliff had passed away?
"On the morning of September 27, 1986, my home phone rang and it was Cliff Burnstein from Q Prime management letting me know he had bad news. When we hung up, I sat there in total shock. I got up from the sofa and started pacing back and forth in my apartment. A few minutes later, the tears started to flow and it felt neverending."

What do you remember about his wake?
"We were still shocked and in disbelief that Cliff was dead. At some point at his parents' home, a bunch of family, friends and musicians went to Cliff's bedroom and reminisced about him."

What's your favourite memory of him?
"I don't have too many memories of Cliff because we worked together for a short period of time, from 1984 to 1986. We always had a good laugh. I joked with him about his flared elephant bell bottoms, and that I was going to purchase him a different pair of jeans. He basically told me, 'Fuck off, Alago, get me a six pack.' I remember going to dinner with Lars and Cliff in London on Neal Street to a very posh restaurant. At some point I said to Cliff, 'We can't snort cocaine in this restaurant.' He said, 'It's not cocaine, it's purple snuff!' Again, we all had a good laugh."

How involved were you with recruiting Jason Newsted?
"I had just signed his band Flotsam And Jetsam to Elektra Records. I didn't want the band to lose him, but I thought it would be much easier to have someone replace him. Jason is one of those wildly charismatic people; when he walks in a room, you feel his presence. I recommended him to Lars over a few phone calls. He got the gig, which came with a lot of aggravation and shoddy treatment. In those early days, in my opinion, the band treated Jason poorly because of their deep hurt over losing Cliff."

How do you look back on your time with Metallica?
"With great pride. I am honoured to have contributed to their success."

MARIA FERRERO

Raiding the family fridge, making out with Lars… the former Megaforce publicist/A&R looks back on her early days with the band

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

How did you get involved with Megaforce Records?
"I was just a kid, so I'd gotten in with Jonny [Zazula, Megaforce founder] because my neighbour used to buy records off him in their store. I was hanging out in New Jersey as one of the gang, answering phones, doing whatever Jonny asked me to do."

How did Metallica come into the picture for you?
"Jonny heard their demo and ran out to a payphone. He was raving about it, so asked the band if they would come East [to New York]. They came out towards the end of '81. They weren't just a California band now – they'd gone national."

What were they like when you first met them?
"I made out with Lars! They showed up at my friend's house and us all being teenagers, we did what teenagers do; drank, then made out! We were on the couch with Cliff and my friend Moira making out next to us, when the rest of the guys came in the room and shouted 'Pile on!' and jumped on us. Nobody – except maybe James and Lars – thought this was going to be the biggest metal band in history. I'd steal food from my family to feed them on tour. One Christmas I raided the fridge and drove to this really shitty motel on Route 18 because that's just what you'd do back then."

How did the press treat Metallica to start with?
"What fuckin' press?! The US metal press wasn't really there yet and tape trading was how the word got out about bands."

What happened when Metallica signed to Elektra?
"We had a concert at the Roseland Ballroom [in New York] that had Metallica, Anthrax and Raven. After that, Anthrax signed to Island Records – they were going mainstream, no more Megaforce underground – Atlantic took Raven and Jonny signed Metallica to Elektra. The night was legendary; little did we know, Lars had gone to Q Prime management so they weren't signed to Megaforce anymore, and we'd been dropped as managers. That was a blow; it felt horrible because we were a family that had struggled together to make things happen but then they walked away. At the same time, I think they *had* to walk away to do what they were going to do."

MICHAEL ALAGO: PRESS/ISAURO CAIRO. COURTESY OF MARIA FERRERO.

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JOHN BUSH

The Armored Saint singer turned down the offer to be Metallica's frontman. Back then, they were just another thrash band

WORDS: JOE DALY

When did you first notice Metallica?
"I saw Metallica open for Saxon at the Whisky A Go Go in LA in 1982 [March 27, 1982 – Metallica's second-ever show]. It was James singing, just on the mic, along with Dave Mustaine, Ron McGovney and Lars, of course."

How did they sound?
"I'm really reluctant to say, but they really didn't sound too good! Ha ha ha! It was in their early stages. James had these leopard pants and he was just holding the mic and singing – no guitar. It's safe to say that he was pretty green and pretty insecure about his position. Later I saw Metallica open for Y&T. They were *on* then. James was playing guitar at that point and they were way better."

What was happening with Armored Saint at the time?
"We were already doing really well. We were playing the *Troubadour* [West Hollywood nightclub] and headlining. And Armored Saint had been friends for *11 years*. Saint were rolling; we were playing clubs and generating good attendance at shows."

How did they approach you?
"It was before they started recording *Kill 'Em All*. Jonny Zazula was the one who called and asked if I was interested. He was the manager of Metallica and he also owned the record company, Megaforce. When Metallica came to me, they were still a local band who were gaining some traction. And that's what Armored Saint was. So it made no sense for me to say, 'I'm out of here, I'm going to join this band', when I was happy in my band and we were doing well. I was flattered, of course. But I explained my reason for wanting to stay with Armored

John hanging out with a very babyfaced Metallica

Saint and I said, 'Thank you very much. It's a huge compliment but I'm going to stay with my band.'"

Any regrets?
"No, I never do. I don't really believe that it was ever my destiny to be in Metallica. It's as simple as that. I don't believe that it was *anybody's* destiny to be the voice of Metallica other than James. Talk about a guy who's had incredible growth as a singer. He's James Hetfield – enough said."

If James ever came down with laryngitis and they called you last minute and said, 'John, we need you!', would you do it?
"Ha ha! Yeah, absolutely. I'd definitely need a teleprompter, but sure!"

KJ DOUGHTON

How one Metallica enthusiast from Oregon ended up running the original fan club from his parents' basement

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

When did Metallica enter your life?
"I was living in Roseburg, Oregon and I was still in high school – I was 17 years old. I heard the four-song demo tape they put out around the time they appeared on the *Metal Massacre* compilation, and I was impressed by that even though the production wasn't great. Then a friend I tape traded with received another demo tape, and that was considerably better. My friend gave me Lars's number, so I called him and said, 'Your demo tape's amazing, I want to help you guys, what can I do?' He went, '[Amazed voice] You gotta be fucking kidding?' You live in Oregon?' Then he said, 'You could answer our mail and run our fan club.'"

This was before *Kill 'Em All* came out. What did it involve?
"I was given the task of sending out as many demo tapes as possible to as many people as possible. That evolved into me selling t-shirts and fan club memberships. I was doing it all in my parents' basement – their address was on those original flyers."

What did members get?
"It was pretty grassroots. It was around $5 in the beginning, and you'd get a badge and a button with the Metallica logo on them. I'd send out newsletters quarterly, and later on, around the time of *Master Of Puppets*, there was this little 12-page booklet with an overview of their history and photos that the band had sent. There was also a folder with their signatures on the back in red."

What was it like seeing them take off?
"It was all so fast. I mainly just remember the feel and the smell of these brown manilla envelopes with demo tapes in them, getting instructions from Lars to send them to key people he wanted them sending to."

Did you get paid for running the fan club?
"I would send the band the money from the shirts that were sold, and they would give me something like 20%. It was very primitive: 'Here's your cheque for the month.'"

How popular did it get?
"Oh, really popular. By the time *Master Of Puppets* came out, I was getting something like 300 letters a day. I was just a laidback fan in Oregon; eventually it got too big for me and I just kind of phased out of doing it."

Did your paths cross later?
"For a while, I felt like I'd been a little bit forgotten about. But then I got a call from their management inviting me to the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame when they were inducted [in 2009]. They had a party, and all these people from the early days were there – the small, underground people who were there near the start. It was like a time machine. It was very emotional."

Lifer: KJ (right) and pal in the 80s

JOHN BUSH: PRESS. KJ DOUGHTON: COURTESY OF KJ DOUGHTON.

CRONOS

British legends Venom took Metallica out on tour. Cue one smashed dressing room and a shitload of weed

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

When did you first hear about Metallica?
"We were looking for bands to support us, and a friend of mine, Bobby The Bootlegger, had this video of Metallica playing live in San Francisco. There's these three blond, long-haired guys at the front of the stage, and there's Dave Mustaine wearing a Venom T-shirt. They looked like Status Quo, but the music was just like us – I heard *Whiplash* and I thought, 'That's fucking [Venom song] *Witching Hour*!'
"When we first started talking to [East Coast promoter/ Megaforce Records boss] Jonny Z about doing some gigs in New Jersey, I said, 'There's a band in San Francisco, can you get them to come 3,000 miles to play these shows?' And he sorted it out."

What were your first impressions of them?
"We were expecting these three, blond-haired Status Quo lookalikes, and it was a bit of a shock, 'cos it wasn't the same band. Hetfield was sitting there with a beer and a smile on his face, and Cliff was stoned out of his mind, which suited me fine. Then you had Lars running around like a blue-arsed fly, telling everybody what to do, and there was a guy with him who we thought was his PA, just running around after Lars all the time. We didn't know until we saw them play that it was Kirk. We said to Jonny Z, 'Where's the other blond-haired guy?' And he went, 'Oh, that's Dave Mustaine, it all went a bit pear-shaped, we don't talk about it.'"

What were they like live?
"I thought they were fucking great. They had ideas of their own, they had plenty of energy and they weren't taking themselves too seriously. We went over to a motorway cafe to get something to eat, and Lars came with us. He was going, 'I heard you guys are sorting out a big tour, we'd really like to put our name forward.' You could see he had a business head on."

It worked: they supported Venom on the Seven Dates Of Hell tour in 1984…
"The first gig was in Zurich, and they were pretty lame onstage. We thought, 'What the fuck happened to this band that supported us in New Jersey?' I don't know if they were over-excited or if they had jetlag. But they went backstage and smashed the shit out of the dressing room. We had to kind of rein them in a bit: 'If you've got the energy to smash your dressing room up, you didn't put enough into the show. You need to come offstage so tired that the last thing you want to do is this – you need to have a drink, get stoned, get some girls in.' They were fine after that."

As bass players, did you and Cliff Burton bond?
"We did. He was a total stoner. At that first gig, he went, 'What have you got there, man?' And I went, 'I've got a big lump of Afghanistan Black.' And he's, like, 'Dude, I've got some weed!' So me and him got fucking battered on this fucking mixture!"

Metallica have covered a lot of metal bands from the early 80s, but they've never done a Venom song. Do you ever think, 'Come on lads, do us a favour?'
"Naaaah, I don't need any favours from anybody."

Cronos: Metallica mentor

PRESS/ESTER SEGARRA

"THEY LOOKED LIKE STATUS QUO"

40

FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

SO LET IT BE WRITTEN

Riffs, arguments with Exodus and murderous plagues: this is the story of how Metallica made *Creeping Death*

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

GETTY

Exodus in 1988 (with Gary Holt, top right). Thanks for the riff, lads

The inspiration for Metallica's first truly world-beating anthem came from an unlikely source. Cecil B. DeMille was the director of some of the most opulent Hollywood movies of the 40s and 50s. For his final film, 1956's biblical epic *The Ten Commandments*, DeMille enlisted chisel-jawed superstar Charlton Heston to play Moses as he led the enslaved Hebrew people out of Egypt to the Promised Land as a series of plagues were visited on their oppressors.

In one Danish household, this Old Testament extravaganza became essential viewing whenever it was repeated on TV years later. "I was obsessed with *The Ten Commandments* as a kid," says Lars Ulrich. "If you watch the movie, you can definitely see that it inspired *Creeping Death*. There's a connection."

That youthful obsession was one of the sparks for the song that helped kick Metallica to the next level. *Creeping Death* was six minutes of ambitious, air-punching greatness that proved there was more to these snarling street rats than booze-fuelled velocity. Almost 40 years on, it stands as one of the keystones of Metallica's career – a track that's as monumental as any Hollywood blockbuster.

Kill 'Em All had barely cooled on the record store shelves, but Metallica were already straining to push beyond the limits of the nascent thrash scene they'd helped define. *Creeping Death* was one of the first songs they wrote specifically for the follow-up, *Ride The Lightning*, and both its scale and the ease with which it came together indicated they were streets ahead of their peers. "Musically, it was one of those songs that came quickly, and then became its own thing just as quickly," says Lars.

Like more than one early Metallica song, it was a bunch of different ideas jammed together. Arguably the most memorable part wasn't even from a Metallica song. The chanted breakdown – *'Die by my hand!,'* soon to become a staple of their live shows – was brought in by Kirk Hammett from his original band, Exodus.

"I was in high school when I wrote the riff," says Kirk. "I was trying to write something heavier than the bands I was listening to, and that felt like the first time that I'd done it. Kind of, like, 'Wow, I'm on to something!'"

The guitarist and his bandmates in Exodus worked the crunching riff up into a song, *Die By His Hand*, which featured on a two-track 1983 demo of the same name. A few months after joining Metallica, he was surprised to hear his new bandmates cranking out the same riff as part of one of the new songs they had written.

"James and Lars hammered *Creeping Death* out in a day and then called me down to the rehearsal space," Kirk told *Metal Hammer* in 2014. "They got to the *Die By His Hand* riff and they started grinning at me and I laughed because I'd had that riff kicking around for so long, but it just worked in *Creeping Death* so well."

"I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL WHEN I WROTE THAT RIFF"

KIRK HAMMETT

The guitarist suspected the pair were given the tape by Exodus manager/Metallica sound engineer Mark Whittaker when they were considering poaching him from their Bay Area rivals in early 1983 and liked the song so much they decided to repurpose part of it themselves. One person who was less than impressed was Exodus guitarist Gary Holt. "I recall calling Kirk up and giving him a great deal of grief," he later recalled. "He said, 'Ah, I thought I asked you if it was OK.' I'm like, 'No, you didn't.'"

Lyrically, *Creeping Death* took its cues from an even older source: the Hollywood blockbuster that Lars had loved when he was younger. "Me and James and Cliff got a VHS of *The Ten Commandments* and went to Cliff's parents' house to watch it, because we didn't have a player ourselves," recalls Lars. The movie provided ideas and imagery that ended up in the finished song – including references to a series of plagues visited upon ancient Egypt after the ruling Pharaoh refused to free the Hebrews. The worst of these sees the Angel Of Death killing the firstborn son in every Egyptian household. "Then this fog appears out of the moon and comes down and starts creeping across the ground, smoke machine-style, and everybody who's caught in it falls over and dies on the spot," says Lars.

It was Cliff Burton who came up with the phrase '*Creeping Death*' to describe this killer fog. "As was often the case in Metallica, it just sounded cool, it didn't have any kind of particular connotation or merit," says Lars. "It was just two words that sounded cool."

The finished song appeared as the penultimate track on *Ride The Lightning*, though in many ways it proved to be the album's real climax. By that time it had already become a cornerstone of Metallica's live set after the band premiered it at the Keystone in Palo Alto, California on Halloween 1983, nine months before the album came out. More than 30 years and more than 1,500 live performances later, this biblical epic stands as a landmark for Metallica, and for metal itself.

DPA PICTURE ALLIANCE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO.

40 FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

OZZY OSBOURNE

The Double O thought Metallica were taking the piss out of him. Then they became BFFs

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

How did you first hear of Metallica?
"Everybody used to stay at LA's Sunset Marquis, so I ran into them there. Not long after, we had them out on tour with us. They came right out of their box; people loved them. They brought along a great following, which helped them take off down the line. They were all nice guys, so I was happy when my old bass player [Rob Trujillo] ended up playing with them."

What was it like taking them out in 1986?
"They were opening the show. I remember walking past the dressing room and they were playing Black Sabbath – I had no idea they were big fans, I thought they were taking the piss!"

Did you hear the *Sabbra Cadabra* cover they did in 1998?
"I didn't know they'd done that!"

What were they like?
"While we were on tour, I'd keep seeing James hanging about, like he wanted to ask something. Eventually he walked up and said, 'We want to play *Paranoid* with you', and we were like, 'Sure!' – then they showed just how big Sabbath fans they were. Cliff had a massive smile on his face the whole time. Of course, it all came back round when I got up to do it with them at the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame [in 2009], which was brilliant too."

They had a reputation for partying a lot. Did you ever end up partying with them?
"No, to us they were just a nice bunch of guys! The wildest we had from them was James, who must have broke his arm three fucking times on that tour skateboarding."

Ozzy and Rob: great chums

Was it obvious to you that they were going to be such a big deal?
"Absolutely, you could tell just from how the crowd reacted every night. But you know, they're a great band – I remember it all really took off when they put out *The Black Album*, especially with *Enter Sandman*."

Were you surprised when the album did as well as it did?
"In this business there's a lot that'll surprise you and I'm forever being surprised by things. Clearly the album touched a nerve or something, but I just know that it's a really good album, you know?

Do you think there's anything in particular that helped make it such a big deal?
"It's one of those albums that came at the right time and place, then took off. If we knew exactly what was needed to make an album go off like that, we'd all do it, but they got it perfectly right and made an absolute must-have album."

Since then you've appeared a few times onstage with them at their shows – how's that been for you?
"Oh man, it's fun! Lemmy used to play with them a lot as well. It's just very fun and welcoming to be up there with them."

What was Rob like when he first joined your band?
"Rob has always been a great friend of mine. He's a great bass player and a great guy; he's the only guy who, when it came time to move, did things the right way. I always ask that the guys who play with me, if they get another offer and want to move on, that's fine, just don't drop me in the shit, give me time to get a replacement. Rob's the only guy who ever did things right by me for that. I'm really happy we've got him playing on the new album as well." H

"ROB IS THE ONLY GUY WHO DID THINGS RIGHT BY ME"

GETTY

John Marshall: ever alert for the call to action!

JOHN MARSHALL

Kirk's childhood pal became Metallica's guitar tech, and was drafted into the band twice when James got injured

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

How did you land the job as Kirk's guitar tech?
"Kirk and I have known each other since we were 14 years old. When he formed Exodus, I used to hang out and help him set up for gigs and tune his guitar. Then when he joined Metallica, he told them about me, and at the end of 1983 I became their guitar tech. When I started, I took care of Cliff, James and Kirk's guitars, but by the Ride The Lightning tour they had hired another tech, and that's when I became Kirk's tech exclusively."

What requirements did he have for his guitars?
"Just that everything works and that the guitars are in tune. He did have this habit of telling me right before the band went onstage, while the intro tape was rolling, that he needed to clip his fingernails! So I learned to be prepared, and always have nail clippers handy."

In 1986, James Hetfield broke his wrist in a skateboarding accident during the Ozzy tour. How did you end up filling in?
"The skateboarding accident happened in the afternoon before a show in Evansville, Indiana. Kirk told me, 'Hey man, you're gonna play guitar tonight!' It was a bit surreal. It turned out that Metallica didn't play that night, so we packed up the gear. It was my turn to drive the truck, and I listened to all my Metallica cassettes repeatedly. When we got to the hotel in Nashville that night, Kirk and I went over the guitar parts together. The next day, Ozzy's crew gave us a long soundcheck so that we could practise the songs."

What was the experience like?
"I had never really played in front of an audience before, much less in a band supporting Ozzy. Ozzy's keyboard player was set up in sort of a 'cave', off stage right under the risers on the side, and this is where I was set up to play. There were monitors there that I could use to hear, and I could see the band, but the audience couldn't see me. After the second or third song, James would introduce me, and I would come out and wave to the crowd, then go back to the cave. That first night I think we played five songs. I'm sure we didn't play very well, but we pulled it off."

You played in Metallica again in 1992, after James was burned by pyro. How did it differ from 1986?
"Well, the crowds were bigger! They were on top of the world at that time. They had a No.1 album [*The Black Album*] and things were just firing on all cylinders. There was also the worry about James's injury, and I think that created some tension – not so much with me, but just in overall mood."

What's your standout memory, from all your years with Metallica?
"Playing the Day On The Green show at Oakland Stadium in 1992. My first concert was a Day On The Green, when I was 16 years old, and to come back 14 years later to play there was pretty incredible. I'm lucky to have had these experiences, and thankful to Kirk for sharing some of his Metallica life with me."

JOHN MARSAHLL: COURTESY OF JOHN MARSHALL. JOE SATRIANI: PRESS/JOSEPH CULTICE

JOE SATRIANI

The guitar legend taught Kirk in Metallica's early days – even then, he knew he was helping to shape a superstar

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

When he wasn't surfing with aliens, Satch was teaching the next generation

How did you first meet Kirk Hammett?
"I was teaching at a guitar store, where I'd also work from time to time. Even though I was only in my early 20s, it was obvious to me that this other generation were the ones that were going to take over the world; Larry LaLonde [Primus], Alex Skolnick [Testament], Rick Hunolt [ex-Exodus] and of course Kirk. Kirk was actually recommended to me, but he was already really talented."

What was Kirk like?
"He showed up super-eager. He was already in Exodus when I started teaching him, but during that time he auditioned for Metallica. I got to get the feel for how his playing developed from *Kill 'Em All* right up to *...And Justice For All*. He'd come in with a firm grip on what he liked and wanted to know how he could improve that. He was hungry to know the secrets of the unusual chord progressions they were playing – looking for something that wasn't rooted in just rock, blues or what came before."

What role did you play as a teacher?
"I'd just show him some options then sit back, because I didn't want to influence him. I liken it to being a doctor at a clinic; what do these guys need and how can I help them? But I'd spend all day teaching, then go at night to rehearse with my band, and it was like, 'We really need to step up our game because these high school kids are blowing us away.'"

Do you remember the first time you heard Kirk playing with Metallica as a band?
"He came to a lesson with a copy of *Kill 'Em All*, actually! I took it home to my wife and we listened to it together. It was just jaw-dropping – so raw and powerful. One of the biggest things I noticed was this super-impressive thing Kirk has in his fingers; he makes a very thick sound. [During lessons] we played in this little plywood room on a tiny amp and he still had so much weight."

When did you know Metallica had come into their own?
"In January '88 he was the last student I taught. He was shaking his head like, 'Wow, you've got this *Surfing With The Alien* record out and you're going on tour!' because it was strange to him thinking of his guitar teacher having a solo career. But I had every faith in all of my students and expected them to get great success. In my mind, the second Metallica released *Kill 'Em All*, they'd arrived – they were already on the road to stardom."

FLEMMING RASMUSSEN

The Danish producer delivered three legendary Metallica albums: 1984's *Ride The Lightning*, 1986's *Master Of Puppets* and 1988's *...And Justice For All*

WORDS: PAUL BRANNIGAN

A legendary producer for three legendary albums

Can you recall the exact moment you first heard the word 'Metallica'?
"Yes, it was when Lars called me and asked if I wanted to record *Ride The Lightning*. I had never heard of them, and I didn't know *Kill 'Em All* existed. The first time I listened to it, they were sitting with me in my studio, Sweet Silence, with James telling me this was the kind of guitar sound he liked and wanted."

When the four of them turned up on your doorstep in Copenhagen, what were your first impressions?
"I really loved their energy and passion and ambition. They had a totally different attitude to the Danish bands that I had worked with, and were really enthusiastic about picking my brain and learning new things. We sparked up a great friendship immediately."

There's a huge leap between *Kill 'Em All* and *Ride The Lightning* in terms of songwriting, dynamics, etc. Was it a challenging album to record?
"Yes, because their technical abilities then were not as developed as their ambitions! So when we listened back to what we had done, they were blown away, and were so proud. I had never heard that kind of power come through the studio speakers. While they were in the studio, they were visited by the guys from Bronze Records, who wanted to sign them for Europe, and when [label owner] Gerry Bron listened to the finished album he said they'd want to re-record everything in London. When they left, James looked at me and said, 'What an idiot!' as we knew that they hadn't a clue if they couldn't hear it was an amazing album. Bronze blew their chance to sign them right there."

When they returned to Sweet Silence Studios to record *Master Of Puppets*, did they seem like the same four guys to you?
"They had matured quite a bit, and their circumstances were improved – this time they had hotel rooms, rather than sleeping on a friend's floor – but they were just as likeable. Every day they would have dinner with my wife and myself at our house before we started recording at 7pm, and they were always fun to have around."

"THEY WERE FUN TO HAVE AROUND"

For you, was that album another great leap forward for the band?
"Oh, definitely. There was so much more they could do now because their craftsmanship had improved – everything was a notch up. We had more time to finesse subtle things, little details you can hear with headphones. *Master Of Puppets* is superb, maybe their masterpiece. I've turned down so many bands over the years who thought they'd automatically get their own *Master*... just by working with me: not every band can be Metallica!"

And then you even turned down Metallica, when initially asked to produce *...And Justice For All*.
"Ha! Yes, but it was a timing thing. Lars called me in November '87, and said, 'We've booked a studio from January 1, we have it for four months, we're doing a new album and we want you to produce it.' I said, 'Lars, I can't, I'm busy until April', and he was like [horrified yelp], 'No! You have to come! We've booked the studio! Move everything else!' I said, 'I can't, Lars. No.' So they started with [*Appetite For Destruction* producer] Mike Clink instead. And then begged me to come over when it was obvious that wasn't working! Ha ha!"

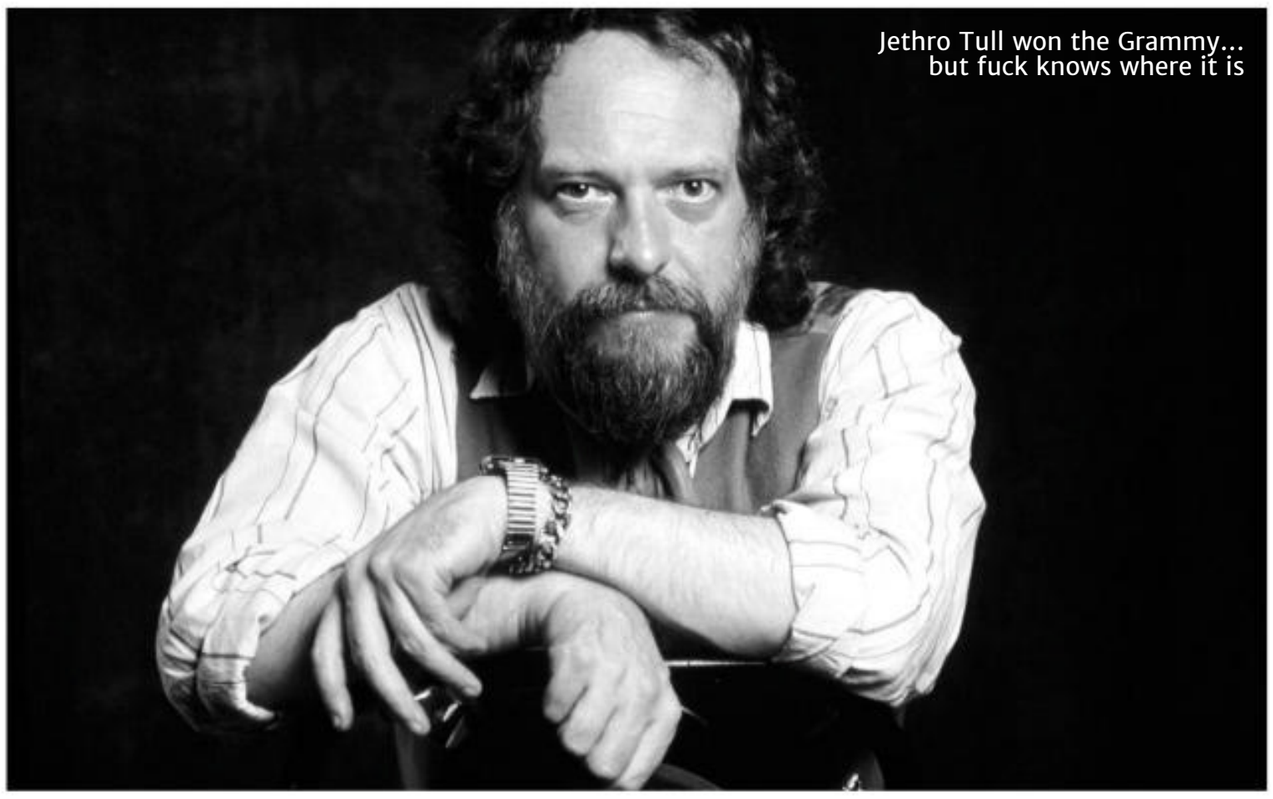
Do you look back upon your time working with Metallica with a sense of pride?
"Oh yeah, I'm totally stoked. I actually wrote a book recently about my career [*Rock & Stjernestøv*] and revisiting those albums and remembering the great experiences we had making them was a trip. Whatever happens, no one can take those memories from me."

COURTESY OF FLEMMING RASMUSSEN

IAN ANDERSON

In 1989, Metallica were favourites to win a Grammy. No one had banked on Jethro Tull crashing the party

WORDS: DOM LAWSON



Jethro Tull won the Grammy... but fuck knows where it is

Do you remember hearing about your Grammy nomination?
"I recall hearing about the nomination, quite a way in advance. It was nice to be thought of, but it seemed a little odd. That was the first year they had the category Best Hard Rock/Metal Performance. It was a new category and, for whatever reason, Jethro Tull was included. But everyone said to me, 'Oh, Metallica are going to win', because they had a big album out [*...And Justice For All*]. So the record company didn't see any point in spending all that money to fly us out to Los Angeles to be there, in rented clothing, and then return on the next plane. So, quite sensibly, they didn't bother."

How did you find out that you pulled off a surprise victory?
"We were working in the studio, quite late at night, and the phone went. It was a guy from Chrysalis Records in New York, and he said, 'Congratulations, you just won the Grammy!' I said, 'Oh, that's nice!' and I went and told the other guys, and then we carried on working and thought no more about it. Then the next day it became pretty obvious that it had been a bit of a hoo-ha. Most of the media people, a lot of the audience and certainly all of the Metallica fans were *aghast* that Jethro Tull had won it."

It does sound quite awkward! Have you ever spoken to Metallica about it?
"I've never met any of them, but I believe the Metallica guys took it pretty well. Unfortunately, and perhaps unwisely, they'd had hundreds of t-shirts printed up saying, 'Metallica, Grammy winners!' and they had distributed them to everyone in the audience, so that was a bit embarrassing. But they took it in good grace, and a year later they *did* win a Grammy. They thanked their producer, the record company, their mums and dads, the family dog... and Jethro Tull, for not bringing out a new record that year."

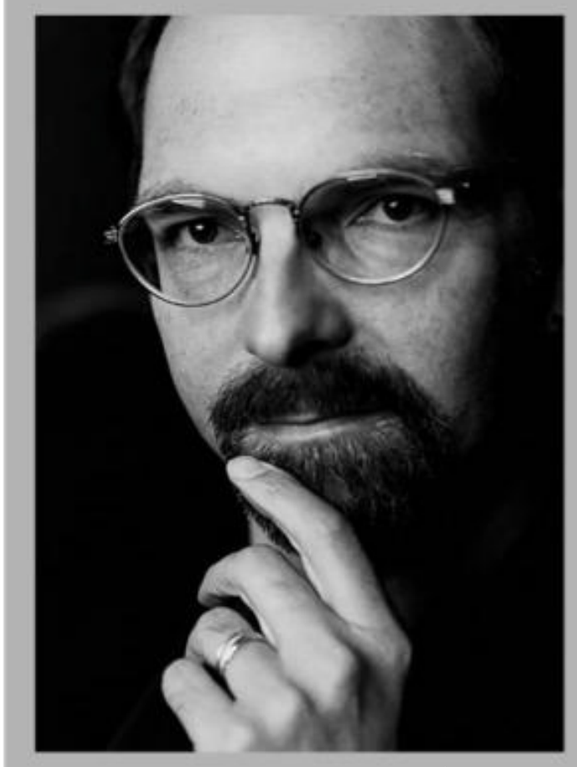
Do *you* feel that you were worthy winners of the award?
"The 5,000 voting members of the National Academy Of Recording Arts & Sciences, in their infinite wisdom, decided that we should have the trophy, and I profoundly thank them on behalf of Jethro Tull. But I don't think they voted for us because we were the best Hard Rock/Metal act, but because we were a bunch of nice guys who'd never won a Grammy before. As I said at the time, if they'd had a category for one-legged flute player, I would have been the dead cert that Metallica were supposed to be!"

Where do you keep the trophy now?
"It sat in an unspecified place for at least 20 years and I had no idea where it was. I don't really like trophies. I don't have gold albums hanging on the wall or anything like that. But my son was clearing out his bedroom when he left home, and he came across the Grammy. I said, 'Great, now we know where it is!' and asked him to leave it where he found it, but he left home and now I can't find it anymore. I *think* it's probably in a drawer, somewhere in the attic." H

MICHAEL SALOMON

Drafted in to co-direct Metallica's first music video, he had a hell of a task pleasing Lars and James

WORDS: PAUL BRANNINGAN



How did you land the gig for the *One* video?
"I was better known at the time as an editor, not a director, and I'd worked a lot for Elektra. They wanted [co-director] Bill Pope to shoot the band's performance, but I'm not sure Bill was so confident about combining that footage with the film [*Johnny Got His Gun*] in a cohesive way. Bill's wife Sharon [Oreck] had her own production company, and I'd worked on a Madonna video [*La Isla Bonita*] for her, so I think she suggested me."

What do you recall of your first meeting with the Metallica guys?
"I met them first at the shoot. I'd spoken at length with Lars about how we were going to integrate the music with the visuals, and he was very wary of the whole video process, and basically told me a thousand times not to fuck this up. Before we shot the performance, I took the song and the movie, and edited together a rough cut with dialogue and visuals, and showed it to them. After about one minute, James [Hetfield] – who was kinda scary to me, I'd heard stories – said, 'I don't know what the fuck this is' and got up and walked away. Not the ideal start."

How did they react to your initial edit?
"I talked to Lars, and he was pretty upset. More than half of that first version was the film, and dialogue, and he said, 'This is our first video, and you're covering up all our music!' He was freaked out. We went back and forth for a month before we agreed on the right balance."

The *One* video debuted on MTV on January 20, 1989. Were you watching?
"No, because as I recall it was the last video played on MTV's late-night heavy metal show, so it aired at about 3:30am on the West Coast, where I was. I thought that would be the only time slot MTV would ever give it, because it was so dark and unusual. But a week after it aired, MTV had so many requests that they started playing it in the daytime, among Michael Jackson and Bon Jovi videos, which was a huge surprise to me. It really affected people; it was a lightning-in-a-bottle moment no one could have predicted."

How do you view the video now?
"I'm surprised and humbled by its lasting impact. Someone recently sent me a copy of *Rolling Stone* featuring a 100 Best Videos Of All Time list, and it was in the low 40s [No.42]. For a lot of people, *One* is a very visceral and important part of their lives. To me, it was a difficult job, and a video that traumatised a generation of 10- to 13-year-old boys!" H

IAN ANDERSON: GETTY. MICHAEL SALOMON: COURTESY OF MICHAEL SALOMON.

40 FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

PHIL CAMPBELL

Metallica loved Motörhead. Motörhead loved Metallica. Their bromance led to partying, cover songs and a Grammy win

WORDS: PAUL BRANNIGAN

Motörhead guitarist Phil *vaguely* remembers Metallica playing as The Lemmys

Metallica had released the Motörhead-influenced *Kill 'Em All* before you joined Motörhead in 1984. When did you first become aware of them?
"It was summer 1984, and both bands were playing a festival in Belgium [the Heavy Sound Festival]. We headlined, Twisted Sister supported, and Metallica were third on the bill. They were really impressive, aggressive and powerful: they weren't there on a jolly boys' outing, they meant business. You could tell they had something special about them. They played like they wanted to take over the world… and, of course, that's exactly what they went on to do."

Metallica are huge Motörhead fans. Was it weird seeing them go massive in the early 90s?
"I know they're big fans of the classic Motörhead line-up, and they were always lovely to us when our paths crossed. But when you're in a band, you're so busy that you're not always aware of what's going on with other bands, so it was a while after the fact that we realised how massive they'd become. Everything lined up perfectly for them on *The Black Album*: they had great songs, a producer who knew how to get a huge sound, a record company who supported them and management who'd worked with big bands before and understood how the industry works. We were happy for them; their success was well deserved."

Did you ever play onstage with them?
"No, the closest I got was when they played the show as The Lemmys in LA for Lem's 50th birthday, with the stick-on moustaches. That was a great night, from what I can remember! They wouldn't have wanted me onstage with them that night… I'm not sure I could have stayed upright for a whole song!"

What do you make of the Motörhead covers Metallica have recorded?
"They did great, because they've a genuine love for the music. I'm sure it led to some of their fans checking us out. I remember telling Lars, 'I just wish you'd covered one of the songs that I co-wrote!'"

What made Motörhead cover Metallica's *Whiplash*?
"I honestly can't remember. When it was suggested, I was like, 'I can't play that fast!' so I worked on a different interpretation. I was really happy with how it turned out. I've never heard what they think of it, but I'm sure they told Lem. It was a great honour to win a Grammy for it."

DOYLE

Metallica wore Misfits t-shirts, covered their songs and introduced them to a new generation. And their guitarist couldn't be more grateful

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

Doyle owes the Horsemen a pint... or four

How did you first hear Metallica?
"I was working at my dad's shop in the 80s, and they started playing local venues, and I just loved the name 'METALLICA!' They'd be playing *For Whom The Bell Tolls* and I remember being blown away by it. But the first record that I got was *…And Justice For All*, and then I got *The Black Album*. It wasn't until I got an iPhone in 2013 that I downloaded all the older records. I'd never heard those, believe it or not!"

When did you first discover they were Misfits fans?
"I actually don't know. People would always just tell me that they were wearing our shirts and stuff. Which was pretty cool. Actually, just the other day, I was talking to Lars and I said to him, 'Thank you for introducing the world to the Misfits', and he looked at me like, 'What are you talking about?' I said, 'Look, if you guys didn't play those songs then we wouldn't be doing this arena tour right now!', and he said, 'Wow! I've never thought about it that way.' Well, let me tell you, I have, and it's the truth. It's got to be more than 50% of fans that tell me that they've heard about us from Metallica. It's very important to me that I acknowledge that and that I acknowledge them, because we probably wouldn't be playing if it weren't for that."

What were your thoughts when you first heard their Misfits covers?
"The covers are awesome. *Green Hell* and *Last Caress* I remember hearing and thinking, 'Wow, they really took it with *Green Hell*, didn't they?!' I didn't know they did *Die Die* [*My Darling*] and I was in my car and I had the radio on, and this song came on and I'm like, 'I know this, what the hell is it?' Then I heard James come in and I freaked out: 'Oh my god, they did *Die Die*!' It was wild!"

How was it when James came up and played with you in 2000?
"Great! James came down for a few shows and was a sweetheart actually – all the guys are, in fact, just so not egotistical at all. We said, 'You wanna come up and sing with us?' and he's like, 'YEEEAAAHH!' and it was super-fun."

What's the legacy of Metallica?
"Well, those guys are probably the best musicians in the world, that's why they're Metallica. And they brought back heavy. They became the biggest band in the world with some of the heaviest songs you'll hear, really ripping metal. It's so impressive."

PHIL CAMPBELL: PRESS/ROBERT JOHN. DOYLE: GETTY.

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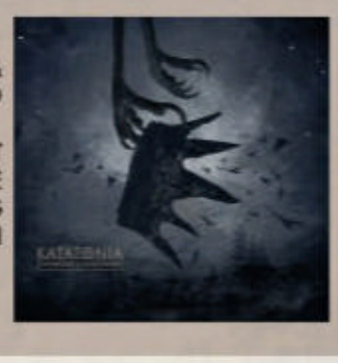

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40
FORTY YEARS OF
METALLICA

BOB ROCK

He initially turned down Metallica's advances, but the super-producer would go on to helm four of the most important albums in the band's career

WORDS: PAUL BRANNIGAN

PRESS/MIKE ZIMMER

Ambitious, driven, uncompromising and supremely self-confident, in the first decade of their career, Metallica weren't used to hearing the word 'no'. So when Bob Rock turned down an offer to mix the band's fifth album, James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich were initially affronted, then intrigued. Passing on that opportunity would turn out to be one of the smartest decisions of the Canadian sound engineer/producer's career, for it opened up a dialogue with Metallica that would ultimately result in Rock producing the quartet's next four albums: *Metallica* (known globally as *The Black Album*), *Load*, *Reload* and *St. Anger*. It's fair to say that the relationship between the Winnipeg-born studio technician and the San Francisco band wasn't always entirely harmonious…

Jerry Cantrell and Bob Rock with Metallica at The 21st Annual ASCAP Pop Music Awards

Having graduated from engineering and mixing hugely successful albums (Bon Jovi's *Slippery When Wet*, Aerosmith's *Permanent Vacation*) to producing hugely successful albums (The Cult's *Sonic Temple*, Mötley Crüe's *Dr. Feelgood*) your career was on a roll before Metallica entered your life: did that make it fairly easy to reject their offer to have you mix their fifth album?
"I didn't really think of it in that way, necessarily. At the time, I was just looking out for the next best job opportunity that might come my way. I knew of Metallica, obviously, but they weren't a band I was in awe of. I didn't understand the sonics of *…And Justice For All*, because when I saw them live they were a heavy, weighty band and that record just doesn't sound that way. That's not a criticism, I know that to some people *…Justice* is the standard of what Metallica should sound like, but that was my observation from an outside perspective at that time, when the idea of working with Metallica wasn't ever a thought in my head."

Lars and James visited Vancouver to sound you out before inviting you to collaborate on the recording of *The Black Album*. What were your initial impressions of those guys?
"They seemed just like regular guys. But they had a cassette of demos with them and so I heard *Sad But True* and *…Sandman* in their basic forms and straightaway I was like, 'Oh, I could do this.' In my head, it felt different to what I'd heard before from them, and they told me that they wanted to do something different. They wanted a change."

Famously, they didn't make your life easy in the studio: while the story about you calling James 'Dr. No' because he said 'no' to almost everything you suggested makes for a good anecdote, it can't have been so amusing at the time…
"Well, there's always a warming-up period on every project, and, er, it just took a while longer with them! They had one way of doing things, and they didn't really trust outsiders: not just me, they were suspicious of everybody. I can say that I'd never been involved with people who were as intense as them. But the tensions came when I challenged them or they challenged me, it was never personal."

"METALLICA DIDN'T REALLY TRUST OUTSIDERS"

Presumably you challenging them ultimately earned you some respect?
"Maybe. But the thing is, I never said, 'No, you're wrong.' I just showed them other ways to potentially get what they wanted. It's well known that by the end both [engineer] Randy Staub and I said we didn't want to work with them again, but that's because we were so beat: eight months in that environment would test anyone. But some of the best work comes out of tension: with all the great bands… Jagger and Richards in the Stones, Steven Tyler and Joe Perry in Aerosmith… there's friction. Metallica are not wimps. They believe that they're the best band in the world, and everyone else needs to get out of the way."

Were you surprised when they got back in touch and booked you in for what became *Load*?
"Well, in this industry when something has the impact that *The Black Album* did, it only makes sense to put that team back together. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. The previous sessions were intense, but when we started *Load* we put all that had happened behind us, and moved on."

Do you have happier memories of the *Load* and *Reload* sessions?
"Well, yes, but to be clear, I have lots of happy memories from *The Black Album* too! They're great people to hang out with, and we had a lot of fun. My 15 years working with Metallica were some of the best times of my life."

One major change you implemented on *Load* was having Kirk Hammett play rhythm guitar on a Metallica album for the first time. Is it true that you initially recorded his parts while James was off hunting, and there was some anxiety as to whether he would approve?
"Ha! No, that's a new one to me! As bands develop they naturally want to

GETTY

Bob and Lars in 2004's *Some Kind Of Monster*

AF ARCHIVE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO/JOE BERLINGER & BRUCE SINOFSKY FILM COMPANY/IFC FILMS

try new things, and at that point they were thinking, 'Well, Aerosmith have two guitar players, Guns [N' Roses] have two guitar players…' and they thought they'd try it. It was their decision more than mine."

The band were in prolific writing form as the *Load* sessions got underway, and the songs kept stacking up. Given your eye for economy on *The Black Album*, did you argue at all for the source material to be streamlined for just one album?
"Well, they had compiled a lot of ideas and riffs in their two or three years on the road, and you don't know how many of those will develop into full songs. But as they shaped up, we were looking at 32 or 34 songs. I can't remember how long the initial *Load* sessions were, but I remember that after we had completed eight songs, we realised that finishing everything would become a three-year project. So that's when they made the call to split it into two records. It was a smart decision – there were more than enough good songs."

You got James Hetfield to open up lyrically on *The Black Album* and commit to genuine feelings, perhaps most significantly on *Nothing Else Matters*. On *Load* and *Reload* did you talk through lyrics on every song?
"Not as such. When we did *The Black Album*, James and I talked a lot about lyricists, and I told him that his lyrics are up there with anyone… Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Leonard Cohen, whoever. I just encouraged him to embrace that, to just continue to be better."

***S&M* was a huge undertaking in a different way. How did it feel watching that come together?**
"It was pretty special. I mean, that all started with me suggesting putting strings on *Nothing Else Matters*. We got in Michael Kamen, who's an incredible arranger, and the band were wary about the whole thing, so that in the final mix you can barely hear the orchestration, but they later realised how cool it was. With *S&M*, trying to keep Metallica as loud as they are and trying to keep the orchestra as loud as they are, was a challenge… basically we just turned up everything! Ha ha ha! But what a great, powerful, beautiful album."

***St. Anger* marked the end of the creative collaboration between you and Metallica. The turmoil and tensions behind the making of the album were captured with brutal clarity in the *Some Kind Of Monster* documentary, but how do you view that time now?**
"It's hard to even put into words. Ultimately, I was there as a friend, trying to be there to help them stay together. That album needed to be made for Metallica to have a future. I feel like England and Europe embraced that record more than America, but that's kinda a side story. No one knew what was going to happen, we just stuck at it until it was done, until the band were OK. My friends were struggling, and I was just there to help, to make sure Metallica didn't end there. I am very proud of all the work we did together, but in some ways, maybe this was the most important work, because without it, there's no Metallica today." H

Hetfield and Halford. None more metal

ROB HALFORD

The Metal God was blown away by a thrash band taking hippie San Francisco by storm

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

What did you think when you first heard Metallica?
"The first few albums are still my favourites, *Kill 'Em All, Ride The Lightning, ...And Justice For All*. It was great: here was a band from America, on the West Coast, who are part of the world that… maybe this will sound ridiculous, but when I was growing up, San Francisco was this hippie place. Beads and sandals and all that kind of stuff, and then you get these metal maniacs making this incredible racket! Wow!"

Do you remember the first time you met them?
"I saw them when they came and did some shows in Phoenix. They were very beautiful guys, like we all are in metal; you look at the other guys in bands and you don't even have to say anything, you know you've lived the life. And then there is the respect. Kirk came up onstage with us [at Louder Than Life festival in September] and was like a kid in a sweet shop – 'I can't believe I'm up onstage with Priest playing *The Green Manalishi*!'"

How important were Metallica to 90s metal?
"If you look at the history of Metallica, much like if you look at the history of Judas Priest, it's a band that's responsible for an incredible surge of attention to metal. Their slightly controversial *Black Album*… it was never meant to be called *The Black Album*, it was just meant to be called 'Metallica' with the snake on the front, but that was like Priest's *Turbo* album, because they cut their hair and they started to sound a little bit commercial. But really, that's never been the case – it was just the band flexing their musical talent and having a great producer behind them. And extraordinary things came from it."

"THEY WERE VERY BEAUTIFUL GUYS, LIKE WE ALL ARE"

What was it like performing with Metallica in 2011, during their 30th anniversary celebrations?
"I did *Rapid Fire*, they love that song, it was one of their favourite moments on *British Steel*. I got a call, I dunno if it was Lars who called me, but they said they were doing this thing in San Francisco and would I come and have a jam with them. I got on a plane by myself the next day and had a run through the next afternoon, got a hotel, did the show that night and flew back to Phoenix the next day. You just run with it; it's just a beautiful opportunity to grab ahold of something when a band celebrate this kind of milestone. We're all clocking in on the mile-o-meter now, aren't we?! Getting our MOTs! It's a beautiful thing."

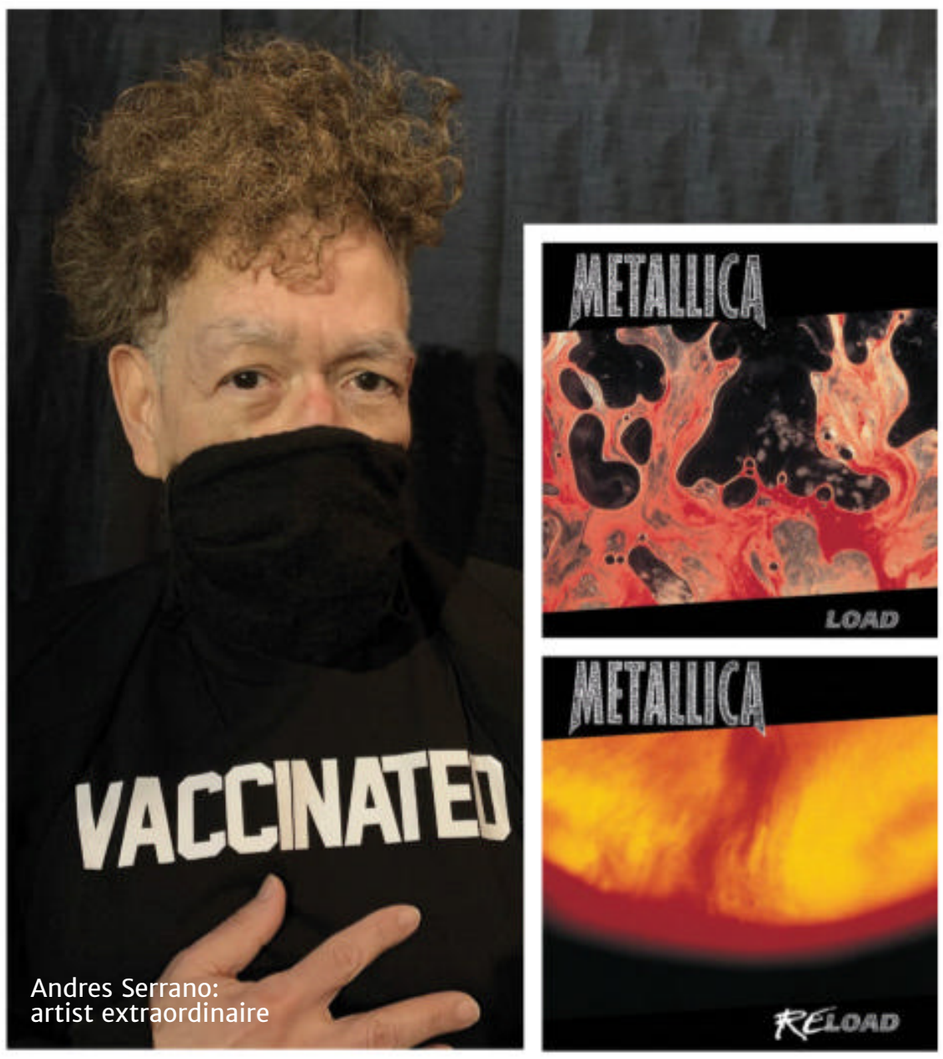
What's it been like being out with them on tour recently?
"Well, they're celebrating 40 years. Forty years of Metallica and 50 years of Judas Priest – it's a great kind of balancing act from two different sides of the world." H

GETTY

ANDRES SERRANO

Turns out using jizz for a metal album cover is a bold move

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN



Andres Serrano: artist extraordinaire

How did Metallica get in touch with you about your art?
"It was Kirk and Lars who asked for the picture for *Load*. I met with them at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, and we arranged for them to use the image for the album, merchandise and all promotional purposes. I was flattered and honoured they wanted it."

Why do you think they wanted your artwork?
"Because it spoke to them. They were drawn to it and I'm glad they were, because the image and album was a match made in Heaven."

Were you familiar with their music?
"I knew their reputation as the greatest heavy metal band ever. It was only later I became familiar with their music."

Did they ask for those pieces for *Load* and *Reload* specifically?
"Yes, they knew what they wanted for both albums."

Where did the inspiration for the art itself originally come from?
"It was part of a series called 'Bodily Fluids'. They were photographs intended to look like paintings, using milk, blood, piss and semen."

How did you get the bovine blood?
"I bought it at the butcher. It would be labelled 'edible beef blood' and I would buy a gallon of it whenever I needed it. The blood would darken after a day, so I thought I needed fresh blood to get the bright red. Later, someone told me to put the dark blood in a blender and it would brighten up again."

What did you think of the *Load* and *Reload* records?
"They're amazing! I was not aware of the evolution Metallica's sound had taken. But I know they felt there was a connection between the two albums. That's why they wanted another image from the series for the follow-up album. Related but different. Everything comes from somewhere, and sometimes an audience may not realise there is a connection between one body of work and another but there could be. Only the artist knows for sure."

What was the reaction, from their fanbase and the band?
"I think the images were a hit. I read a review once where the *Load* album was named No.1 on a list of best album covers. We know Lars and Kirk were happy with it but James was not. I think James is still fuming!"

EDWIN OUTWATER

The conductor was a fan of Metallica's *S&M* project and even got to get in on the act for the sequel

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE

Why do you think the announcement of the original *S&M* provoked such a divided reaction from Metallica fans?
"Like any deep genre, people want things to stay the same. I learned getting into this genre that there's the metal police, but there's also the jazz police and the classical police, so it's a certain kind of fan who has a moment they treasure that they think is the pinnacle of something, and then when a band moves in a different direction, it's hard on them. But if you're an artist, rather than staying in one place and doing the same thing over and over, the impulse to move forward is a noble one, to try things, to take risks. And that seems to have always been part of Metallica's MO."

What did you think of *S&M*?
"I think it really worked. I was honestly a bit surprised it worked, because sometimes Metallica is a wall of sound, so where does the orchestra fit in? It's easier in other genres where there's more sonic space for the orchestra to go in and riffs to get out, so it was surprising that *S&M1* worked, and I think that is greatly due to [composer] Michael Kamen."

Why do you think Michael approached Metallica in the first place?
"I know he was involved in a lot of band work, and probably heard something in Metallica's music that called out to him. There is a melodic element to Metallica's work that lends itself to orchestral writing. I'm not just talking about *The Black Album* and beyond – *Fade To Black*, even some of the thrashy songs had a melodic hook."

What do you think *S&M*'s legacy will be?
"It was just another amazing, audacious thing that Metallica did that worked really well. I think it set the stage for countless other rock/orchestra collaborations. There were things like that in the 60s and 70s, but for this generation, it was this idea that was a super-exciting thing."

Edwin (left) with fellow conductor Michael Tilson Thomas and Lars

What do you think it says about the impact of the original *S&M* that the announcement of the sequel shows in 2019 got such a universally positive response?
"When you're a visionary, people have to catch up with you! It's a story as old as time; truly creative ideas are often not met with universal acclaim. What was fun about *S&M2* was how much harder they wanted to push the idea."

ANDRES SERRANO: COURTESY OF ANDRES SERRANO. EDWIN OUTWATER: PRESS/BRETT MURRAY

40 FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

SHUTTERSTOCK

JASON NEWSTED

The legendary bassist talks Kiss, joining Metallica in the late 80s and ripping fingers in the name of art

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

Given the impossibly long shadow cast by Cliff Burton, it's a minor miracle that Jason Newsted managed to carve out one hell of a legacy of his own during his time with metal's biggest band. His tenure with Metallica was underpinned by an immense period of change for the Four Horsemen, from having to move on from Cliff's tragic death to the sonic leaps they made across the 90s. Through it all, he remained Metallica's most grounded member, his steady but firey presence helping to propel them to unimaginable heights. In an exclusive new interview, we asked him about his very earliest days as a bass player, his initial audition for Metallica and what it was like stepping out with them for the very first time.

Tell us how you got into playing bass

"I got my first guitar when I was nine. I never really figured out the chords, the tuning, but I sat in my room and I wrote songs, even back then. My mom still has some of that stuff stored away somewhere! Imagine that. As far as working out the bass parts… 12 years old, junior high school, ensemble band, I was playing saxophone. A guy named Andrew Buckley brought [Kiss album] *Dressed To Kill* into the band room, and just looking at that front cover, Paul Stanley on tip toes and Gene Simmons in his clogs, that's when everything fucking changed. I took it home and played it over and over as many times as I could before I had to return it. I [wanted to] be Gene Simmons, obviously, he's the biggest character, he's the superhero, he's the most attractive thing to a 12-year-old kid, right? So, I go to my little *Sears Catalogue* classical guitar, and it's got three pegs on either side of the neck. I manage to take the middle pegs off from the neck and I get three strings at the top and one down the middle, and I just tune up to sound like the bass on Kiss and go from there. That guitar still sits in my father's house. I still go in there and play *Am I Evil?* on it!"

Tell us about your time in Flotsam And Jetsam

"I ended up in Phoenix [with my band at the time], got myself into two different jobs, daytime and evening. February 1982, there is an ad on the wall of this place in Phoenix from Kelly Smith talking about Rush and Iron Maiden, and looking for a bass player. I borrowed someone's car and put my bass rig in the back, drove the 15–20 miles up the road and set up in Kelly's dad's office, rocked out for a little bit. We messed around, got some other guys in and changed names and stuff, and after a year of pissing about we decided to form Dogz. Flotsam rose up from all of that."

How were you feeling going in to audition for Metallica?

"Honoured to begin with – they were heroes and quite a bit above us at the time. So just to be amongst them was very special to begin with, but because of how I was raised, I was prepared for every goddamn thing. That's how we did it in Flotsam, and so I went in totally prepared and confident. I got a 6.30am flight from Phoenix, they let me up in this complex and the fog is rolling over and the sun is coming up and I'm like, 'Holy shit, I'm in San Francisco!' Few hours go by and I'm just there, practise, practise, practise the whole time, got my sandwiches with me. The guys finally show up about 10 and I've been there since 7.30. A guy comes up to me and says that I'm going to be in there last, and asks if I want a bottle of water. I'm like, 'A bottle of water? Wow! These guys have got some money!' I lived in Arizona, three dollars an hour, if you can get water, you get water, doesn't matter where from. So bottled water? Fuck, we're living, man! I finally, at the end of the day, go in, and James has had, I don't know, between 10 and 16 beers.

"They're still fucking self-medicating, grief-stricken [after Cliff's death], running from this process that they know they have to be forced into. So already the ground is shaky, I've been awake for two days because I've been thinking about this moment. I've written the set that they played with Ozzy in Tuscon, I hand it to James and go, 'Name one [song for me to play]. He names one and we play it, play another and another, bam bam bam! We go outside and grab a drink and something to eat and they're asking me questions about my experience: how long had I been playing, how many gigs had I done, how long had I been in Flotsam… their managers were already booking things in, making plans, and you have to have that schedule free. I told them that it wouldn't affect me and that any time they needed me, I'd be there. I flew home that night and Lars called me the next day and told me to come back and learn these [new] songs, so I went back about 30 hours later."

"I WANTED TO BE GENE SIMMONS"

Cliff's parents were there when you found out you got the job, right?

"That evening, it was the third day that I played with the boys, I think I stayed overnight in San Francisco for the first time, and you gotta remember that I had lived in a tin shed with no toilet and no bathroom in Arizona and now I'm staying at the Miyako Hotel. That third night, they had the 'elders' come in for their blessing. So, Torben Ulrich, The Burtons, a couple of the crew guys, people that had been there from the get-go, I'm not sure if there was a couple of the other families there. We got through about six tunes: *Master…*, *Fade To Black*, *…Bell Tolls*, the masterpieces! So I am just composing myself for a second, putting my bass down, turning off Cliff's amp – I'm playing fucking Cliff's amp, dude! Jan [Burton] comes walking in the room by herself, and she grabs me and gets my attention. She says, 'Great job, son', and I'm like 'Oh, fuck!' She embraced me and it seemed like it was quite a while, and she said, 'You're the one, you must be the one. Please be safe, we love you' and she gave me a kiss. That was 35 years ago and I'll never, ever forget it."

What was it like stepping onstage as a member of Metallica for the very first time?

"I was nervously excited, anxious mostly. I did not have any lack of confidence in myself – I knew that I knew the songs, and I knew that I had the energy, which was required a lot back in those days to play in Metallica. It was very physical and very athletic, and I had that. But one thing I do remember – I'm not sure if I've ever told this story – I used to have these two pinky rings, custom-made skull things. One had a diamond in the eye and one had a ruby in the eye. I only kept one on, because you can't play [with two] – I even have to wear my wedding ring around my neck because I can't be smacking my strings with it. So, we're on the way down and I couldn't get the ring off. My girlfriend at the time was going down with me and she's trying, and I've got one of our stage hand guys who is showing me to the stage and he's helping, but we can't get that fucking ring off! I'm ripping, dude, because I'm all jacked up and I've been playing so much that my hands are swollen and the ring is just fucking with me! I gotta get this off, dude! I finally just rip it off and all this flesh comes with it – *crunch*. So that first time going on stage with Metallica, [I was] nervous enough already, but that ring added a little something else."

PRESS/ADAM BYERLY

Jason Newsted in October 1996

GETTY

40 FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

UNIVERSAL MONSTERS

As Metallica rolled into the new millennium, the band were at breaking point. Cue two filmmakers, a therapist and one of the most fascinating music documentaries ever made

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

Director of Photography Bob Richman with the guys at Metallica's headquarters/ studio during the recording of *St. Anger*

"FUUUUCK!" Lars Ulrich screams into James Hetfield's face, but the frontman doesn't flinch. It's an extraordinary moment in the documentary *Metallica: Some Kind Of Monster*, as the tension that's been ratcheting up between the pair for decades comes to a shocking climax.

For co-director Joe Berlinger, it was also a scene of great cinematic merit. "From a filmmaking point of view, when your intention is to capture raw human emotion, it was pure gold," he says.

Some Kind Of Monster was an intimate portrait of a band working through an interpersonal crisis that had been bubbling under the surface long before the cameras started rolling. By early 2001, Metallica's management company, Q Prime, were aware of fracturing relationships in the band, and had drafted in psychotherapist and 'performance enhancement coach' Phil Towle, to help ease relations as they prepared to make their eighth record. His first meeting with Metallica took place at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in San Francisco, but the smooth introduction he had intended on making did not go as planned.

"Jason came in and said: 'I'm leaving,'" remembers Phil. "He asked me to go to the room adjacent, where I listened to him railing against the bandmates for 10 minutes. And that was chaos. I decided at some point to knock on the door and say, 'May I come back in? This is exactly why I'm here.' And Lars said, 'Let him stay.' And we started the process, which was an awkward, challenging moment."

In a statement, Jason cited "private and personal reasons" for his departure, and "the physical damage I have done to myself over the years while playing the music that I love". A series of interviews for *Playboy*, conducted two months earlier but published in March 2001, also revealed that James had forbidden Jason from releasing music with his side-project, Echobrain. "The band were stunned, and a fight ensued, and there was a lot of conflict in that first session," Phil recalls.

The group therapy continued regardless, and during this period documentary filmmaker Joe Berlinger flew over from New York. He had been in talks with Metallica about doing a film that could be released as pay-per-view content, or as a bonus featurette on the CD for their next record, but now Lars told him there might not even *be* a new record because Jason had quit the band. When Lars also explained they were working with a performance enhancement coach, Joe's artistic interest was piqued; would they allow

him to film the sessions? Incredibly, the band said yes.

"I remember sitting in this nice lounge room of a hotel suite, with these icons of metal, of male testosterone, opening up to each other and exploring how they feel," Joe says. "There was a little bit of reluctance from James, but as I got to know him better, I'd say it's amazing that he opened up on that first day with the camera in front of him."

The session also had a therapeutic effect on Joe; he realised he wanted to continue documenting the process, and after splitting with his longtime filmmaking partner, Bruce Sinofsky, he felt compelled to reach out and bring him into the project. Filming stepped up as Metallica moved into the empty barracks at the Presidio, a former military base in San Francisco, with emotions still running high. After one particularly intense disagreement, James slammed the door behind him and did not come back.

Instead, the frontman checked into rehab. Phil knew that he would be doing intensive therapy there, and was determined that the sessions between himself and Kirk, Lars and returning producer Bob Rock should continue so the band could connect more easily when he returned.

Lars dived deep into his own past. In a segment that held a mirror up to the drummer's perfectionism, he played demos to his father. In an astonishingly open scene, he also met with Dave Mustaine, who told him how hurtful it was to be fired from Metallica and that he missed "his little Danish friend". He also, however, alluded to the fact that the absent James was yet to reach out.

"It was a very touching moment for them, and it was the beginning of some healing, and also they left the meeting with some unfinished business too. It wasn't all nicey-nice, right?" says Phil. "But I think Lars realised that there were things he wishes he could have done differently with Dave."

Following *Some Kind Of Monster*'s release in 2004, Dave condemned the scene and said he had asked for it not to be included, citing unhappiness with the final cut and describing the unsettled mood he was in during filming, two days after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. However, he had already signed a release form, granting the filmmakers legal permission.

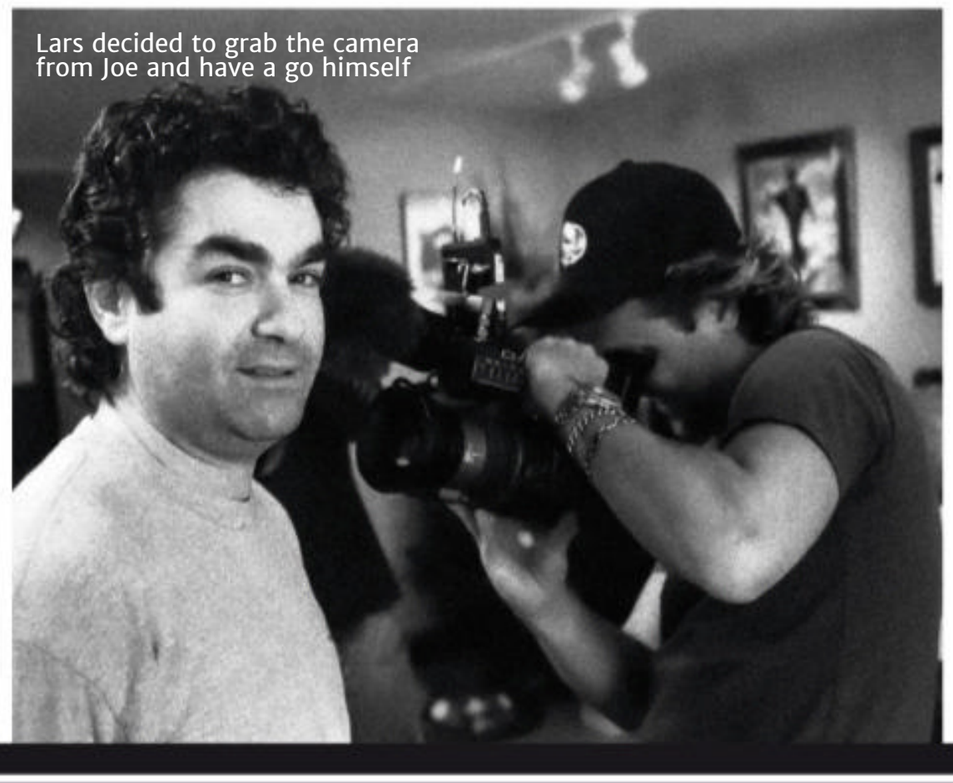
"I think two years later when he saw the scene and 9/11 was now a thing of the past, and people weren't spiritually awake the way we were that first week, he regretted perhaps participating," says Joe. "But I think that's a shame. I think he is very strong and human."

Psychotherapist Phil Towle (in red) keeping a watchful eye

James returned from rehab with new ground rules: he would only work on their album between noon and 4pm. Resentment flared between him and Lars; was Lars allowed to listen to songs after James left for the day, if he didn't change anything? Why couldn't Lars just do what he wanted anyway? That frustration exploded via the sweary drummer's most notorious utterance of one simple word: "FUUUUUUCK!"

"THEY WERE WONDERING WHETHER JAMES WOULD EVER COME BACK"

PHIL TOWLE, METALLICA'S PSYCHOTHERAPIST


Lars decided to grab the camera from Joe and have a go himself

"These guys are waiting for James. Waiting, waiting, waiting – not only waiting, but wondering whether James was ever going to come back. They were scared it was over," explains Phil. "And when James comes marching back and says, 'I can't work between certain hours and certain hours', Lars was really pissed off. Like, 'What the fuck? We've been *waiting* for you, and you've controlled us for 10 months.' And he probably felt that James had controlled them for *more* than 10 months, right? So this was the collision of years of frustration."

Because of the outburst, because Lars already had a reputation for running his mouth off, and because of the recent media attention surrounding his battle with file-sharing service Napster, some fans began to turn on him.

"Lars was not being an asshole, he was just somebody who was expressing the pent-up anger he had felt," says Phil. "And James was saying, 'Look guys, I have to work with my family, maintain my sobriety and maintain my composure.' So that collision was scary, but it was necessary."

To Joe's mind, the overarching issue was that Metallica were trying to reconcile how to make music without indulging in the practices that had earned them the 'Alcoholica' tag in their younger years. "I think living that ethos of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll in their 40s wasn't working for them," he says. "A lot has been said about the tension between James and Lars, but I think the larger issue is that the band was wanting to continue to make music, but they

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Left to right: Rob Trujillo, Bob Richman, James Hetfield, Joe Berlinger, Lars Ulrich, Bruce Sinofsky, Kirk Hammett

didn't want to live that life that made them famous."

Following the bust-up, work on what would later be titled *St. Anger* gathered speed, alongside their journey of self-reflection. Encouraged by their work with Phil, the band had started contributing lyrics collectively, but there's one moment when the coach himself offers a suggestion, which is highlighted in the film. "That to me was a crossing of the line," says Joe.

Not long after, James rounded on Phil and accused him of becoming too attached to a future with Metallica, suggesting it was time to terminate their involvement with each other. Caught off guard, Phil is visibly teary-eyed and shaken.

There was some background to this encounter, says Phil. A year or so earlier, he and Metallica had agreed to part ways – but then Lars had called and asked him to stay. He'd been under the impression that the partnership would continue, and admits it was difficult to hear he was no longer needed.

"The unhealthy part of me is guilty of wanting to hold on to something, because this was like a family to me," says Phil. "It was like something I had never experienced before, personally and professionally. No person in my work gets to be with a group of people, almost every day, for 12 hours a day. The embedment makes it difficult for an ending like that. Then it was done on camera, in contradiction to what I thought was agreed upon. So that was a moment when I fumbled the ball."

After fans saw *Some Kind Of Monster*, some cast Phil as the villain of the piece – criticism that was difficult to stomach, especially as he had no right of reply. But last year Lars publicly stated that Phil saved Metallica – and Joe agrees.

"I think the misperception is that he had his hooks in the band for fees and he was just looking to milk the situation," says Joe. "I don't think that's the case at all. I think he's a caring human being who wears his heart on his sleeve, and did great work in the band, and it got to the point where his job was done, and he had a hard time saying goodbye. But in having a hard time saying goodbye, he unwittingly gave Metallica the tools they needed once again to come together as a brotherhood."

St. Anger was released on June 5, 2003. Reactions were mixed, with widespread criticism over the album's production, in particular Lars's snare sound. But when *Some Kind Of Monster* followed six months later, fans were shown how lucky they were to still have Metallica at all. "Prior to making it, I would have told you that the role of the documentarian [during filming] is to observe, but not affect or change the outcome," says Joe. "But what's interesting about the Metallica film is that Lars said the cameras were like a truth serum. He felt that the therapy would not have worked if there weren't cameras there to record it. And so while I don't want to take credit for the salvation of Metallica, I do think *Some Kind Of Monster* really helped them work through their issues."

The film was a true first, taking viewers into the private lives of one of the world's biggest bands, as well as showing metal musicians – with their reputation for bravado – being vulnerable with the aid of a therapist. There might be sensational scenes and occasional bursts of levity, but Joe says fans have told him it helped them to address alcohol problems, and bands have thanked him for allowing them permission to be human. By making *Some Kind Of Monster*, he and Bruce, who sadly passed away in 2015, captured an incendiary time in Metallica's history and reimagined what a music documentary could be and do.

"When some people dismiss this film as *Spinal Tap*, I find that deeply offensive, because I think these guys were brave and honest and dealt with real issues that all creative people go through," says Joe. "If you think it's a real-life *Spinal Tap*, you've totally missed the point of the film."

Bruce Sinofsky and Joe Berlinger in the yard at San Quentin where the video for *St. Anger* was made. The prisoners all had to squat down during a disturbance at the prison

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40 FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

SCOTT REEDER

Being a finalist in the auditions to replace Jason felt like winning silver in the Metal Olympics

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

Scott didn't get the job, but he did get to party hard

How did you end up auditioning for Metallica?
"At some point after Jason was out, Lars was hanging out with my old [Kyuss] bandmate, Josh Homme, and asked him who he thought should be the new bassist for Metallica. Josh pointed him my way. Metallica and Kyuss had toured together in Australia back in '93, so they were familiar with where I was coming from. Anyway, I was working outside at the ranch when Lars called. My wife brought the phone out and thought it was a prank call from Maynard from Tool! Nope – it was actually Lars!"

What happened next?
"They flew me up a week or two after the call. We sat around a table and talked for a while, and finally James said, 'Well, let's fuckin' play!' They had me call 'em out – we did *Fuel, Creeping Death, Master Of Puppets, Enter Sandman, The Unforgiven, Fade To Black*… They had their Christmas party for the whole Metallica organisation while I was up there, so that was fun! They took over a bowling alley and raged! The next day, it was back to work on *St. Anger* overdubs. There was a certain song for which James asked us all for lyrical input… Everyone wandered off and scribbled down whatever lines or phrases came to mind. After a while we got together and presented it all to James. He gathered his thoughts, and cut his vocals right next to me on the couch in the control room! That was pretty crazy."

How did you find out you didn't get the role?
"The three guys called me together to let me off the hook a few weeks later. They hadn't made their final decision yet – I suspect that they were clear that Rob was their frontrunner. Around a half hour after that call, I got a call from James, just making sure I was alright. I told him I was stoked to have even been considered! I said, 'This was like the Metal Olympics or something, and I got the silver medal – it's all good!'"

How did you feel about *St. Anger* when you heard it?
"Well, it's the one album that I don't own. They played me some of it when I was up there. I thought Lars was pulling my leg about the snare sound for a minute, but he was pretty excited about it; if there's one thing I learned from my time in Kyuss, it's that there are no rules!"

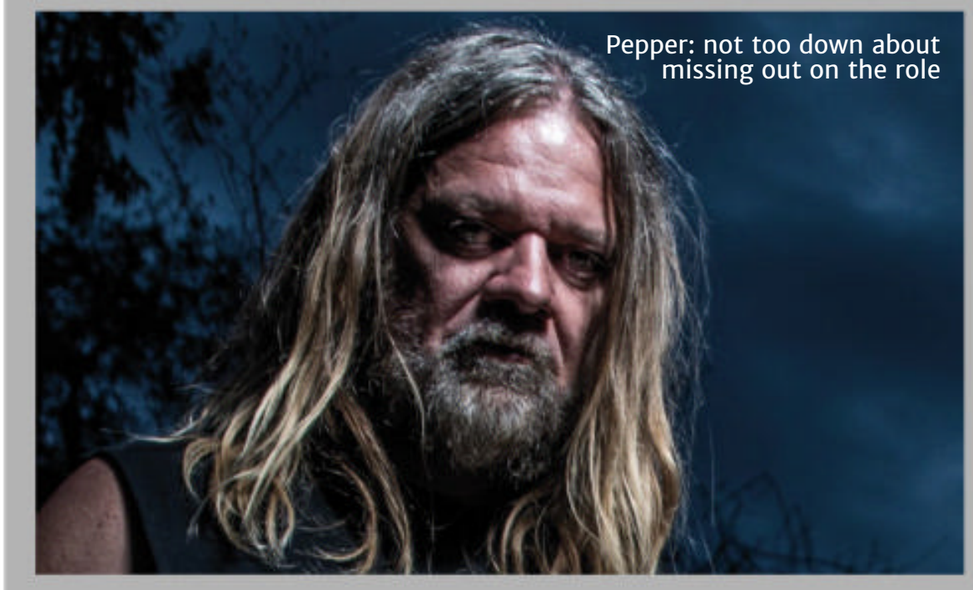
What did you think about the lack of solos on the album?
"Man, Kirk is a lead guitar virtuoso! To me, it was like having Luciano Pavarotti in the band, and asking him to pipe down!"

What do you think of Rob's legacy in Metallica?
"He brought some fierce, old-school energy and well-rounded chops for days – I have huge respect for that guy, and it took some balls to take that gig and make it his own."

PEPPER KEENAN

If Corrosion Of Conformity's main man had landed the bass gig, he would have taken Metallica back to the old school

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS



Pepper: not too down about missing out on the role

How did James Hetfield end up on your song *Man Or Ash* in 1996?
"They were in the studio in New York City and we were at Electric Lady Studios in New York City doing [fifth album] *Wiseblood*. He came by the studio one day and we were sitting there listening to this song. He was like, 'What? You're not going to ask me to sing?' We were joking about it, but we set up the mics real quick! By the time we were done, it sounded like it was meant to be."

Did you end up auditioning as bassist for the band as a result of your friendship with James?
"We had jammed a bunch and we had appreciation for each other's songwriting. He just asked me if I wanted to try out. We kept all that shit under wraps; it was top secret back then."

What was the process like?
"They narrowed it down to me and [current Metallica bassist Rob] Trujillo. I went online and found the last live set they were doing. They said, 'What do you know?' And I said, 'Play your last live set.' I think I went three times. It was great but when Trujillo got in the game, I knew it was going to be him. He's a monster. I knew he was a fantastic bass player and he played with his fingers like Cliff did."

How did you feel when you didn't get the job?
"They all called me and told me they'd made the decision to go with Rob. I was upset but I wasn't that upset, because I wouldn't have been me anymore, I'd have been the bass player for Metallica."

How do you think *Death Magnetic* and *Hardwired…* might have turned out if you'd played on them?
"Ha ha! If I'd been in Metallica, I'd have been wearing the old-school Metallica t-shirts and trying to go backwards and trying to do what I thought was cool. It would have been cool to be in a think tank with James and Lars writing songs. I would have liked that challenge."

What is it that makes Metallica so special?
"They were a game-changer, even back in the day. Their catalogue is so deep now. It goes on generations, and they stuck to their guns, and they went in all kind of different directions, but still anything they do sounds like Metallica."

SCOTT REEDER: PRESS/CHRIS MILLER/IMAGINE IMAGERY. PEPPER KEENAN: PRESS/ DEAN KARR

EMMETT MALLOY

Co-directing the *St. Anger* video at California's San Quentin prison was like nothing he'd experienced before

WORDS: PAUL BRANNIGAN

Emmett and Brendan Malloy with the guys

Shooting a video inside a prison could come across as exploitative. What was top of your list of things not to do, to guard against this?
"Well, I'd say it was hard to know what not to do. But what I would say is that I felt that, at that time in music and in culture, being in a prison that heavy, maybe the only artists who could have pulled it off were Metallica, and maybe, say, 50 Cent. When I was in there I was thinking, 'Dude, thank God we're with this band, because if we were with anyone else, people wouldn't have wanted us crashing their day.' Metallica have a presence, and that seemed to lend itself to the heaviness of the day. There were times where you'd get stark reminders that this was a prison not a set, like when a buzzer sounds and every prisoner suddenly hits the ground, and you're left standing – that's a reality check."

What special measures did you have to take to ensure your safety and the band's safety?
"Well, we had to check in every single item, everything down to the last pin, which took almost a whole day, but when we got there, it got kinda loose, to the point where I was thinking, 'Man, if there was ever a day to make a prison break, this would be it!' We could shoot in the cells, and we got access to prisoners on good behaviour who were interested in being on camera, and those things weren't in the playbook when I first spoke to the authorities."

Did shooting inside the prison present different technical challenges?
"We had to sign a 'no hostage' policy, which means that the guards aren't obliged to rescue you if you're taken hostage by a prisoner, which was different! I scouted out the Maximum Security area before shooting, which felt like being in *The Silence Of The Lambs*, with people screaming passages from the Bible, and I knew that the Night Stalker, Richard Ramirez, was in there, and I was thinking, 'Why the fuck am I doing this?' I remember during shooting some naked dude pushed right through me to get to the showers, so that was another reality check! The band felt the weight of the day, and we did too. I remember Lars, beforehand, was scared that he'd be identified as 'The Napster Guy', and I was like, 'Dude, I think these guys might have bigger concerns than music piracy.'"

"IT WAS LIKE BEING IN *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*"

James Hetfield gave a speech to the prisoners, ahead of the gig they played on day two, which was powerful and emotional: was watching that an emotional moment for you?
"Well, to be honest, on day two I was out shooting footage in Oakland, and I felt more at risk then than I did shooting in the prison! [Photographer] Danny Clinch was there and he told me how intense it was. But when I was with James on day one, prisoners would walk up and tell him about the power of his music in their lives, that deep, heavy, profound connection, and he listened with such respect, and you could see he understood. James isn't chatty like Lars, he sits and stares all day, but I could see him take it all in, and everything was landing big with him. Remember, this was a time when he was very vulnerable emotionally, and you could tell there was a sense of, 'There but for the grace of God…'"

You've got a stellar CV, but we're guessing this was a shoot that has lingered long in the memory
"Oh man, I only have a handful of music videos that really have a significance and weight all these years later, and that's one shoot that's on that short list. It felt like we did something important. I love the *Master Of Puppets* era – that's my Metallica era – but this felt like a cool moment in their history, with James coming back and everything they went through on *St. Anger*. I was psyched to be there, it was a powerful cultural moment, and I feel real lucky to have been part of it." MH

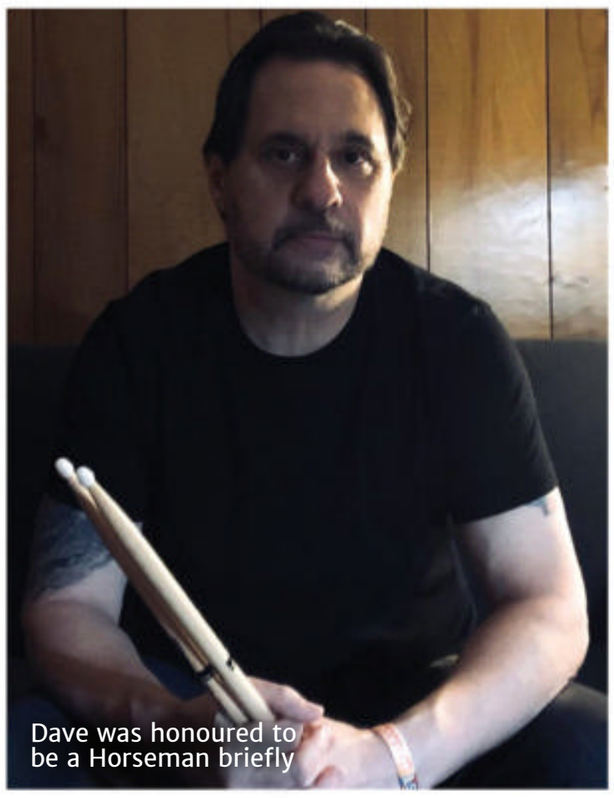
MAIN: GETTY. INSET: COURTESY OF EMMETT MALLOY.

40 FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

DAVE LOMBARDO

Tag-teaming with Joey Jordison when Lars dropped out of Download 2004 was an honour for the Slayer legend

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY



Dave was honoured to be a Horseman briefly

Slayer and Metallica both started in 1981 in Los Angeles. When did you first hear about them?
"I remember a live demo tape being passed around, and we'd listen to that – we were blown away. Slayer got to play with Metallica really early on at a club called The Woodstock in Orange County [on Oct 22, 1982]. I remember standing between James Hetfield and Dave Mustaine, watching them. That was an amazing experience."

How did you end up playing with Metallica 22 years later, at the 2004 Download festival?
"Slayer had played in the tent earlier in the evening, and I was somewhere backstage when I was approached by management. They said, 'Lars can't make it, and Metallica was wondering if you'd be able to sit in?' It was a bit of a shock. My first thought was, 'Is Lars OK?' But they said, 'He's OK, he's at the doctors, he's just having a bit of a moment.' So I said I'd do whatever I could to help."

Did they bundle you into a rehearsal room with the other guys to learn the songs?
"Yeah, that's exactly what happened. I knew a few of their songs well enough to play them, but I just didn't know all the detail of some of the other songs. So we agreed that I'd do the first two, *Battery* and *The Four Horsemen*, then Joey [Jordison] would jump in, 'cos he'd been in a Metallica covers band and he knew all those songs inside out."

It's five minutes before you're due onstage. What's going through your mind?
"Excitement. I love challenges: 'Alright, let's do it, we'll work it out and make it happen.' I was thrilled to be up there with those guys, but it was surreal seeing James and Kirk and Rob in front of me. Like, 'Is this really happening?' But I couldn't question the moment, 'cos there was something more important at stake, which was to help Lars and the band deliver these songs, and deliver a show for the fans."

Did you watch Joey play?
"Yeah, he was awesome. He knew the songs front to back, and he nailed it. I thought I was gonna jump in and play one of the songs during Joey's section, but they decided to keep him for the rest of the set, which was totally cool with me. It took the stress off of me, like, 'I know this song, but I really don't know it as well as Joey does.'"

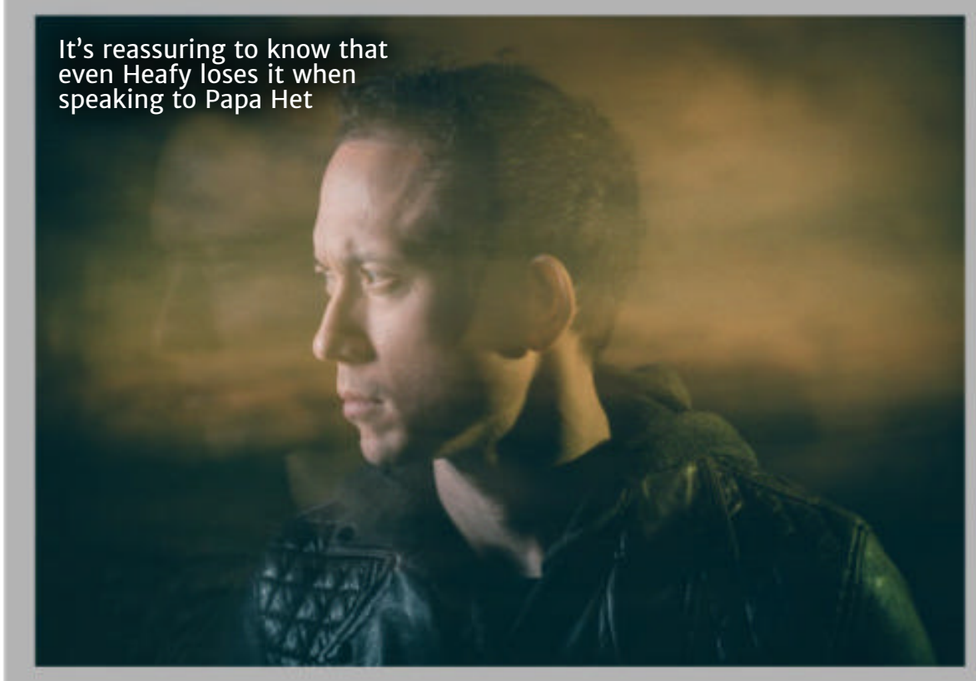
Did briefly stepping into Metallica's world give you a different perspective on what they do?
"Oh yeah, especially with the live show. They were headlining, so the energy there was just intense. I definitely had to retain my composure and think, 'This is going to be great, stay positive, let's rock.' After it was all done, we all took a bow at the very end. They were really grateful – they appreciated the help."

How do you look back on it today?
"For them to even ask me was an honour, and I'm very proud to have helped them out when they needed it, and just been a small part of their history. Come on, I got to play with Metallica!"

MATT HEAFY

They say you should never meet your heroes… but Trivium's frontman got to play with his at Download 2006

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS



It's reassuring to know that even Heafy loses it when speaking to Papa Het

What did you think when you heard Metallica were playing *Master Of Puppets* in full, for Download's 20th anniversary in 2006?
"I couldn't believe it. I was so psyched because that was the first time we got to meet them, play with them, tour with them. They're the reason I got into metal. Unfortunately Hetfield is the person I went up to and [accidentally] said, 'You're my greatest fan.' Then I started stammering and stuttering and freaking out; my brain glitched."

You joined them onstage at that show to play a Misfits track, *Die Die My Darling*. What was that like?
"Metallica looked at Avenged, Bullet, and Trivium as the next line of modern metal. They saw that early; they called it and let us all come up. I knew the song thanks to *Garage Inc.* The first version I heard was Metallica's, not Misfits'. I got into Metallica pretty backwards. So got into *The Black Album* first. Then *Load, Reload, Garage Inc., S&M*, then I went back."

What did it mean for you to share that moment with one of your favourite metal bands?
"The fact they invited us was nuts. I think it was the same show, we were doing a *Guitar World* photoshoot [backstage] with Kirk Hammett, and he said to me, 'Hey Matt, I notice you guys do a lot of tremolo picking for your rhythm guitar parts. I think it's really interesting. I always thought of that as a lead thing.' I showed him one of my guitar picks and he's like, 'This is cool, I'm going to start using this.' So he puts on a Trivium shirt that night and now his signature guitar picks are the ones that I showed him. Years later, I was able to give both him and James one of my signature guitars. That night, Kirk plays my guitar onstage for, like, five songs of the set. But again, I had another weird faux pas with Hetfield. I pass him my guitar and the volume knob flies off. It was rolling around and I said, 'Oh, it's supposed to do that', and no one laughed."

Do you keep in touch with them?
"We don't stay in touch or anything like that, but I know for sure that when we bump into each other there will be hugs and stuff. Actually, Kirk Hammett picked myself and my wife up in San Francisco once and took us to one of his favourite Chinese restaurants from childhood. That was super-amazing."

DAVE LOMBARDO: COURTESY OF DAVE LOMBARDO. MATT HEAFY: PRESS.

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KERRY KING

Coming up together in Orange County, Slayer and Metallica built a movement that'd change metal forever. Just don't ask the former's legendary axeman about anything Metallica put out post-*Black Album*...

WORDS: JOE DALY

Before entering the history books as half of metal's famed Big 4, Metallica and Slayer were a pair of feisty young upstarts, slogging it out on the Orange County club circuit, united in their disdain for hair metal and their commitment to making the fastest, heaviest music that the world had ever known. Slayer's Kerry King looks back on those early days, and Metallica's rise to the top of the heavy metal pantheon.

When did you first meet Metallica?
"I saw them in the Woodstock [The Woodstock Concert Theatre in Anaheim, California] before they were a Bay Area band. I saw them play with Dave Mustaine – that's how long we're talking about. Actually meeting the dudes? I don't know. But we did play with them a time or two before they went to the Bay Area."

What were your first impressions?
"I liked it. I like speed metal or thrash metal – which hadn't been named yet – which is what they were to me. I liked what they were doing with it and I was already into Venom. I've always been a big Venom fan, and I think that a cross between Venom, Priest and Metallica kind of made Slayer what Slayer is."

In the 80s, the hair metal scene in Los Angeles was notoriously cut-throat. Was it the same situation in Orange County?
"I don't think so. I obviously can't speak for Metallica, but they probably avoided Hollywood as much as we did, because that was glam central. Orange County, where I'd seen them play, that's where a ton of heavier bands and punkier bands came from. So I think, rather than them being competition at that point, we were all competing against glam."

GETTY

In 1984, you briefly played with Megadeth. Did you have any sense then that Dave Mustaine was resentful towards Metallica?
"Probably. But I looked up to Mustaine ever since he was in Metallica. I was in the crowd with Jeff [Hanneman, Slayer's late lead guitarist] actually, saying, 'Look at that dude! He's just ripping up there!' He's got a great style and in the beginning, it helped Metallica become what Metallica is. And let me tell you something – to this day, he's a great guitar player. But yeah, I played five shows and then Dave wanted me to stay around and I didn't have any reason to stay around because I had Slayer. I remember having a conversation with him and saying like, 'Yeah, but we have all this dark stuff', and Mustaine saying something like, 'Well, we've got this song, it's pretty Satanic', and I was like, 'At the end of the day, dude, it ain't about that. I came to play with you. I think it went spectacularly well but it's time for me to get back to my band.'"

What do you reckon is the biggest factor in Metallica's success?
"They were probably the best with melody, be it vocal or guitar harmonies. Sure, we had guitar harmonies but they were still on the darker side, whereas with Metallica, it was more – I don't want to cheapen it by saying this – but it's more everyman's music. Like I said, I don't mean that in a cheap way; it's easier to get into for people than Slayer's darker tones and darker lyrical vision. Metallica wrote stuff that anybody could like without going, 'Why am I liking this?' or, 'Is it OK to like this?' Whereas people have probably asked themselves about us for decades, 'Is it OK to like Slayer?' Ha ha!"

What was your reaction to *The Black Album*?
"I may not have been super-stoked on it, but I never hated it the way a lot of people did. To this day, I like that record a lot. I think it's Metallica but I don't think it's thrash Metallica. You can hear where all the influences come from, from all of their older stuff. They just super-slowed it down and made it super-heavy; they made it super-catchy. That record probably sold more than all of my records, combined! Ha ha ha! There was so much grief over that when it came out. And to be honest with you, everything that came out after that for a long time, that's what I have a problem with. But *The Black Album*? It's still heavy. It's got some fast stuff on it."

KEVIN NIXON

Kerry King, Dave Mustaine, Scott Ian and James Hetfield at Sonisphere Poland, 2010

"METALLICA ARE EASIER TO GET INTO THAN SLAYER"

The first Big 4 show happened in Poland, in 2010. The day before that show, there was a famous roll call photo taken of all of the musicians. What was the vibe like?
"It was cool. The Metallica quotient was weird for me because, even then, they were bigger than everybody. But we ran in very different circles. Unless we ran into them at a European festival somewhere, we didn't see them very often. I know the photo you're talking about and at that point I thought, 'This will be really cool for the fans.' By the end of that first show I thought, 'You know what? That was cool for me, too.'"

What do you remember about those shows?
"Just that we loaded our set. It's hard to say 'loaded our set', because we only played eight or nine songs, but we played some heavy, heavy hitters. Just because we hadn't played with Metallica since the early 80s! We wanted to make a great showing and we went out there, guns fucking blazing. And we had great shows. We wanted to make ourselves seen doing what we do best, and set the stage for Metallica, because they're coming out after Slayer and they're going to be playing some heavy hitters, too."

What's Metallica's greatest accomplishment?
"Man, they've had so many. One that I can say we were a part of was the Big 4 show at [New York's] Yankee Stadium. I think we were the first musical concert at the new Yankee Stadium and I think that was big for Metallica, so I'm happy to be a part of that with them. But their greatest achievement, I would say, has got to be *The Black Album*. That's the biggest level of success for them. It may not be my thing, but it's the first thing that comes to mind."

Would Slayer ever do a Big 4 if they did it again?
"I would! Ha ha ha! But the way that I'm moving forward is I don't think Slayer are ever going to play again. There's no business of me playing by myself! Ha ha!"

40 FORTY YEARS OF METALLICA

SCOTT IAN

The Big 4 shows in 2010 were legendary – and Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian says they helped save his band

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

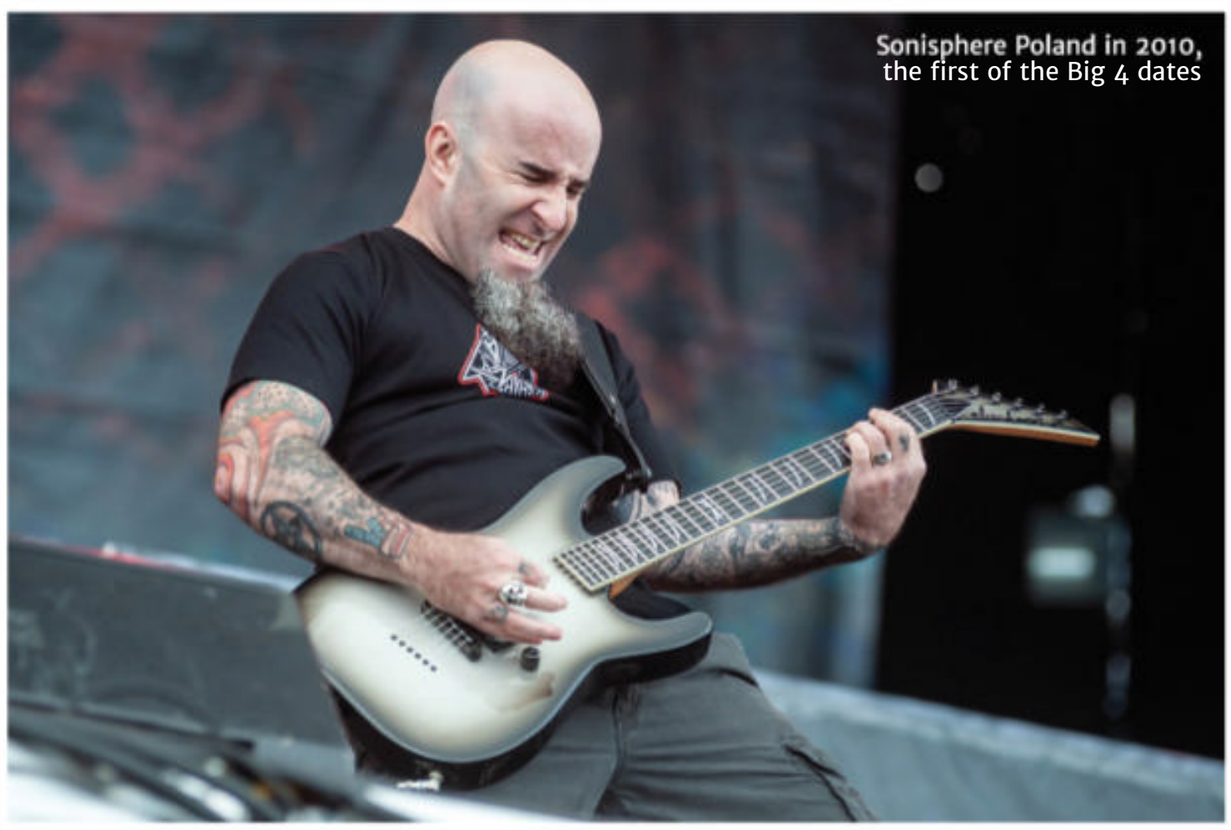
How long had promoters been approaching Anthrax with the idea of a Big 4 show?
"It's not something we'd seriously thought about, to be honest. When Lars brought it up to Charlie [Benante, Anthrax drummer] and I the first time, it was when Metallica were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame in 2009. I think it was the afterparty and Lars came up to us; he just said, 'Hey, what would you guys say to doing some Big 4 shows?' I didn't even know what he was talking about! When he mentioned us, Slayer, Megadeth and Metallica playing a show, it was like, 'Oh, that would be amazing! But you guys are *never* gonna do that.' I chalked it up to drunk talk and didn't think Lars was serious, but thinking about it later, and how everything Metallica do is done with military precision, they clearly already knew and were just running it past us."

What was the mood going in to do those shows?
"We were incredibly excited. Strictly speaking about Anthrax, we were in the weirdest part of our career in that period. We didn't officially have a singer because Joey [Belladonna, vocalist] hadn't signed back on, but here we were writing the record that became *Worship Music*. When we got that phone call [from Metallica's management], it kicked things back into gear for us in so many ways. We knew then we *had* to get Joey back in the band – he was the guy who was there when all these things were happening for us in the first place. Without those shows – and the record we put out – I honestly don't think Anthrax would still be here 10 years later."

What are your favourite memories of the shows?
"I remember sitting in a bar in Romania on a night off and Slipknot happened to be there too, so I was with Corey Taylor and Kerry King. I got this text from Kirk saying, 'Hey man, we're thinking about putting together a jam session for the show in Bulgaria, for the movie [*The Big 4: Live From Sofia, Bulgaria*]. We're thinking about doing *Am I Evil?*. We've got a room set up backstage to rehearse it, if you're interested.' Hell yeah I was interested! My favourite memory of doing those team-up jams was when we did *Overkill* by Motörhead [in New York]. Oh my god, it was a fuckin' trainwreck at the end! Lars got up and Dave Lombardo sat down, so the bit at the end of the song where the double-bass kicks back in suddenly got 10 times faster than what we'd been playing, so we all got lost trying to figure it out. Then Charlie gets on and the pace changes *again* – it was carnage! It was so much fun, though. One night we were out drunk with Lars and he just runs and dives into the bushes, like it was 1984. Those shows were fucking brilliant, man – like the ultimate summer camp."

What do you think Metallica bring to The Big 4?
"The dynamic Metallica bring is that you can reach the highest commercial heights in all music, transcending genre while remaining underground. Metallica didn't have any of the avenues pop, country or rap are afforded – they did it anyway. Nobody is ever confused who should be the headliner and the closer of those shows – it was Metallica and they proved that every single night, not that they have anything to prove to anybody."

Scott Ian has awesome memories of his "ultimate summer camp"



Sonisphere Poland in 2010, the first of the Big 4 dates

PRESS. INSET: KEVIN NIXON

STUART GALBRAITH

The mastermind behind Sonisphere's Big 4 shows thinks they were even better than Monsters Of Rock

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

When did you start wanting to pull together a Big 4 event?
"It all tied in to Sonisphere. With John Jackson of K2 [Agency], we came up with the concept of a new festival that wouldn't just be based in the UK, but would work on a touring basis. We approached two bands – Iron Maiden and Metallica – and they both bought into it, and for several years they were part and parcel of Sonisphere. Part of the reason Metallica agreed to Sonisphere's proposal was the idea of bringing the Big 4 together, so we worked on doing that for the 2010 event. We had some magnificent shows – literally history-making, and now never to be repeated. It was an honour to be part of that."

How many shows did you attend?
"I was at *all* of the shows! The atmosphere was stunning from the minute we opened the gates, right up to the final chord Metallica would play that night. That was the case everywhere we went; the sense of history wasn't just backstage, but also front of house. A lot of people recognised it was probably the only time they were ever going to get the opportunity to see those titans together, plus it's a given by this point they'll go down great no matter where they play."

How did it feel to bring the show to the UK?
"I think the Big 4 shows ended up being better than even Monsters Of Rock. I was involved with Monsters Of Rock from 1984 up to the last one in 1996 at Milton Keynes Bowl, and later did the first five years of Download Festival. I've done a *lot* of shows over the years, but Knebworth is an iconic location, so to get the Big 4 to that place and add them to the list of bands like Led Zeppelin and Genesis that had played there – especially considering it was the only Big 4 show ever played in the UK – was amazing."

As the biggest of the four bands, why do you think Metallica's sets were so important?
"I think without them it becomes hard to measure the rest of the scene's achievements – you wouldn't necessarily talk about a Big 3 in the same way. Metallica play stadiums wherever they go, and there are very few acts that can do that on a global scale."

GEEZER BUTLER

Poser hair metal bands were swept aside as thrash took hold, and Black Sabbath's bassist couldn't have been happier

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

What did you think of the thrash metal movement when it emerged?
"I liked it. My nephew, Pedro Howse, was in a very early thrash band back in Birmingham, called Crazy Angel, and I used to see them whenever I was in England."

When did you first hear Metallica, and what did you think of them?
"I was aware of them, but didn't pay much attention until *The Black Album*. I was glad I didn't have to listen to 'hair' bands anymore, masquerading as metal."

What did you think of *Enter Sandman* the first time you heard it?
"I thought, 'Wish I'd written that!'"

Did you know Cliff Burton?
"I didn't know him. I would have liked to have met him, as I heard he rated my bass playing, so we would have something in common. Not a lot of musicians around that time admitted to liking Sabbath. Metallica and Anthrax changed that."

In the 90s you were pushing yourself into new territories with the g//z/r / geezer project. How much do you think Metallica's presence in the 90s helped other metal bands to try and evolve?
"I think all metal bands owe their existence these days to Metallica – it revived the true metal movement, and inspired new bands to make good music again."

What was it like playing with Metallica in San Francisco back in 2011 as part of their big 30th birthday celebrations?
"The highlight for me was playing *A National Acrobat*, which was one of my favourite Sabbath songs that we never did live. It was great playing with the guys on their own turf and in an intimate setting."

Geezer and Sabbath bandmate Tony Iommi with Rob, Kirk and Het at 21st Annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Why do you think Metallica are still so popular after 40 years?
"Because they have maintained their excellence in writing and live shows, and their music appeals to both young and old."

STUART GALBRAITH: COURTESY OF STUART GALBRAITH. GEEZER BUTLER: GETTY.

WENDY DIO

Metallica appeared on a charity album that paid tribute to her late, great husband, Ronnie James Dio

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

Wendy Dio has a lot of love for the Metallica guys and the way they support the charity

How did Metallica's contribution to 2014's Dio tribute album, *This Is Your Life*, come about?
"When we did the *This Is Your Life* tribute, I got contacted and told that Metallica wanted to get involved and record a song for us. Obviously I was blown away by that, because they're such a great band. In the end, they couldn't decide on one song, so they decided to do four songs in a medley instead [*A Light In The Black, Tarot Woman, Stargazer* and *Kill The King*]. If you listen to *Kill The King*, it's such a great version of it. It brought the song back into modern times. I listen to it all the time. Metallica obviously love Ronnie's music, but I think they surprised themselves with what a great job they did. Everybody worked so hard on that whole album, and gave their time and talent. It's still raising money for the charity [The Ronnie James Dio Stand Up And Shout Cancer Fund], which I'm really pleased about."

Did Ronnie have a good relationship with the Metallica guys?
"Oh, absolutely. I don't know if you've read the beautiful letter that Lars wrote for Ronnie's funeral, but it was so touching. I read it again recently and it brought tears to my eyes. It was so special. So I think the Metallica guys and Ronnie loved to play together, and I think Ronnie had the same admiration for Lars that Lars had for him. They did a lot of different shows together over the years and there was such mutual respect between them."

Have you stayed in touch with the band since then?
"Absolutely! My thing in life is to keep Ronnie's music and his legend alive, and Metallica have played their part in that. They've done a lot of stuff for our charity, and I'm very pleased and grateful for that. Lars always stays in touch and helps out whenever he can."

What separates legends like Metallica and Ronnie from everyone else?
"Well, Metallica are the last of the great bands, really. All of these bands coming up now, I don't know if they will be listened to in 40 years' time. Metallica could be the last one, because you can only invent the wheel so many times and they were real innovators, just like Ronnie. But it's great to hear young bands playing music inspired by the older bands. Kids are listening to their parents' music!"

EMILY EAVIS

The Glasto co-organiser never had any doubt that Metallica would smash their first slot there in 2014

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

Why did you book Metallica for 2014?
"We thought they'd be a great headliner and loved the idea of surprising people."

Were you expecting the booking to get the reaction it did?
"Yes. We tend to get a lot of flak about booking anyone who isn't from a certain quite narrow demographic…"

People petitioned to get them taken off the bill, because of James's associations with bear hunting. Were you aware they were going to show an intro video of themselves dressed as bears, killing fox hunters?
"Yes, we knew a bit about it, but we left them to it, it was very much their thing. It was great! We loved the way they poked fun at themselves and the hysteria around them playing. It helped to amp up the excitement."

What's your standout memory of their performance?
"The start of the set was just incredible because we knew straight away it was gonna work. The atmosphere was electric and they came on and slayed everyone. It was striking how loud and powerful they were compared to other acts on the Pyramid… they're just unbelievably heavy, but they know how to get the party going too. You can see why they have been headlining festivals all over the world for decades."

What were they like to meet?
"Lars came to the festival the night before they played, so we showed him round. We thought it might be a quick tour of the main stages, but it ended as the sun came up on the hill in The Park, having walked pretty much every inch of the site, which is many miles. We immediately bonded with Lars because he's such a great bloke, and genuinely interested in what we do here, he got so stuck in. No one does that the night before they headline! He's come back every year since with his family, and he is part of the family here now too. Meeting them for sunrise is part of the weekend tradition for us now."

Metallica inspired Emily to book more heavy bands at Glasto

To what extent did Metallica pave the way for you booking heavier bands?
"I think they definitely helped inspire us to book more heavy rock acts, from Motörhead and ZZ Top to the Earache Stage over in Shangri-La."

Does metal belong at Glastonbury?
"Yes. All great music does!"

Who's the heaviest band you would book for the Festival?
"We had Napalm Death in 2017, and it doesn't get much heavier than that! But I think Guns N' Roses need to play here at some point don't they?"

WENDY DIO: COURTESY OF WENDY DIO. EMILY EAVIS: PRESS/EMMA HARDY.

BABAK JALALI

Recruiting Lars for his film *Radio Dreams*, the Iranian-British director depicted Metallica fandom as an act of rebellion

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

Babak: making teenage dreams come true

Your 2016 movie, *Radio Dreams*, features the fictional story of real-life Afghan metal band Kabul Dreams meeting Lars Ulrich. How did it come about?
"I wrote a story set in an Iranian ex-pat radio station in San Francisco. We heard about Kabul Dreams, who had just moved to San Francisco, and the producer said, 'It would be really cool if they were part of the story of this radio station.' And Metallica were my favourite band in my teens – I was completely obsessed with them. So we sent the script to Lars via a friend of the producer, and he read it and said, 'I'm in!'"

What was he like on set?
"He was great. This was a very low-budget film, and the set wasn't grand or comfortable, but he was great. He had researched Kabul Dreams, and researched my previous film. There's a scene where he talks to the band about their background – that was based on the questions he had. And he came to the US premiere and appeared onstage. He was a really good sport."

Why Metallica? Why not another metal band, or even a band from another genre?
"In Iran, after the [Islamic] revolution in 1979, Western music was outlawed. Possession of that kind of music, of playing it live, was illegal. There was forceful implementation of those ideals. Metal and rock became the ultimate show of rebellion, and Metallica were the most prominent bands that people listened to. Having a poster of *Ride The Lightning* or *Master Of Puppets*, even in private, was a big 'Fuck you!'"

Kabul Dreams are from Afghanistan. Why didn't you use an Iranian rock band?
"Culturally, Iranians and Afghans have a lot of similarities, but Afghan society is way more traditional, even with all of Iran's restrictions. For Kabul Dreams to have emerged from that society was a much bigger deal. One of the parallels we tried to point out was, 'Here is Afghanistan's first rock band meeting the world's biggest rock band in an Iranian radio station in San Francisco with very few listeners.' Just the absurdity of it all."

Did the teenage you fanboy out at meeting Lars?
"I really did. There's a photograph of me on a school trip to Calais in the early 90s with a poster of Metallica playing live, and I'm kissing the poster. My friends sent me the picture and said, 'Show this to Lars!' I was, like, 'No way!'"

ADAM 'EDGE' COPELAND

The WWE Hall Of Famer has no time for *Black Album* haters

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE

Lifelong fan Edge respects Metallica's experimentation

When did you hear Metallica for the first time?
"In my home town, there was a gang and they were called Damage Inc. That made me go, 'What is Damage Incorporated?', so I looked into it and it was, 'Oh, it's a Metallica song!' So I started going down the wormhole, and they became *my band*. They weren't mainstream – they had groundswell for sure but it was just so different at that time, and thrash was coming to the forefront. Slayer weren't as accessible, and Megadeth… you almost had to be a mathematician. Anthrax were very 'New York', but there was something about Metallica that just spoke to me, and looking back now, it was the writing. Hetfield's writing. There is some deep stuff going on in there, you know? They're more than a metal band – metal almost pigeonholes them. They're speaking to some big things."

Songs like *Fade To Black* weren't things that you'd see other thrash bands of the time trying…
"No, I think they'd be afraid to try it. And that was one of the things I appreciated about Metallica, especially going forward in life, was their bravery. To try things, even if they fell flat on their face. They didn't care! They were trying things, exploring and trying to break down different boundaries, and that's why I don't think it's even arguable at this point that they're the biggest metal band of all time."

Do you have any favourite tracks or albums by Metallica?
"*Ride The Lightning* is always going to have that soft spot for me because that was the starting blocks for me. So *Ride The Lightning* is probably my favourite, but you really can't go wrong. You go back to *Kill 'Em All*, I love how raw that sounds, *Master Of Puppets*, I love *…And Justice For All*. I was about 17 when *The Black Album* came out, and it was *everywhere*, and I appreciated it! I appreciated the changes, I appreciated it slowing down and the different production values and the bigger sound… you put those songs on and they punch you in the heart."

So you've really been with Metallica for the whole journey, then…
"I never left. I never hopped off when they cut their hair. Coming from a type of art form myself, I appreciate wanting to try different things. You do the same thing night after night, eventually you phone it in and the audience isn't gonna connect."

BABAK JALALI: COURTESY OF BABAK JALALI. ADAM "EDGE" COPELAND: PRESS

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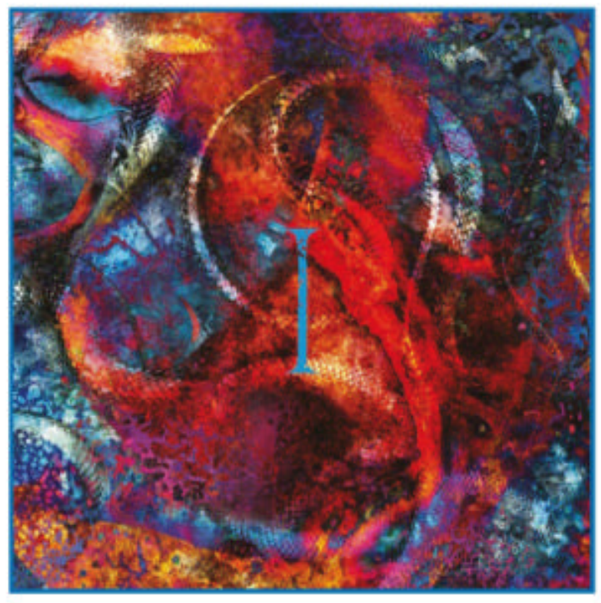
Converge, Chelsea Wolfe and their collaborators seek out new territory

CONVERGE & CHELSEA WOLFE



Bloodmoon: I

EPITAPH

Chelsea Wolfe, Stephen Brodsky and Boston's hardcore pioneers forge a transcendental union

DESPITE MEMBERS' VARIOUS side-hustles and extracurricular activities, Converge as we know them have been the same core unit for some 20 years now: a locked-in puzzlebox wherein cruel, intricate pieces mesh to form something artful and elegant, yet undeniably deadly. Even for a band so creatively restless and laser-focused on pushing their music forward, *Bloodmoon: I* feels like a significant shift in terms of both sound and spirit: a de facto blowing open of the bunker doors that invites trusted friends into the band's creative inner circle.

While other musicians have long dotted the band's releases – most notably 2009's *Axe To Fall*, which added a smorgasbord of high-profile players to the album's list of credits – there's always been the sense that such collaborators were very much *guests* chez Converge. The Roadburn-birthed *Bloodmoon: I*, by contrast, sees Chelsea Wolfe, Ben Chisholm and Cave In's Stephen Brodsky roll up their sleeves and get involved at a foundational level, kneading the musculature and funnelling creative juices in directions that it would be hard to imagine Jacob Bannon, Kurt Ballou and co taking on their own.

The most immediately noticeable departure for long-time listeners will be the addition of Chelsea Wolfe's sinuous voice. She oozes amid the shredded rasps and phantom croons like honey flecked with broken glass as she accentuates the opening track's queasy, writhing lurch and the feverish trails of its lingering melodies. If a more familiar collaborator, the influence of longtime pal and former bassist Stephen Brodsky also takes the

"*BLOODMOON: I* HAS REDEFINED THE ENTIRE HEAVY METAL LANDSCAPE"

EMILY BIRDS/PRESS

band into some unforeseen places. While the tangly Led-Zep-gone-prog riffing of *Tongues Playing Dead* isn't too strange a gambit, the spacey post-hardcore of *Failure Forever* definitely edges into less familiar territory, nodding as it does to the likes of, err, Failure.

This isn't to say that this is an album that solely comprises stylistic sidesteps and wild artistic leaps. *Viscera Of Men* opens with the kind of rabid, ravening blast with which we're intimately familiar – even if it does sprawl out into a doom-laden horrorscape that's part-way between holiness and blasphemy – while elsewhere, the ominous descents and impossible, needle-like spires mark out terrain that the band have traversed over the course of their lengthy career. It's testament to all the players, that even the most un-Convergelike elements form logical parts of a grander picture. Nothing sounds a whit out of place – not even the Wolfe-led *Scorpion's Sting*, which comes off like a Lynchian murder ballad, or the quiet, yearning ache that introduces the sublime *Crimson Stone*.

By turns devastating, majestic and redemptive, *Bloodmoon: I* doesn't feel like a happy accident, or even the product of sheer hard work by a handful of supremely talented musicians. It feels like an album that needed to be made: a chest-tighteningly exciting and thoroughly atypical piece of work from a band who have not just redefined themselves, but also the entire heavy metal landscape. Again.

FOR FANS OF: Swans, King Woman, Anna von Hausswolff

ALEX DELLER

AD INFINITUM
Chapter II - Legacy
NAPALM

Switzerland's symphonic metallers hit a creative spike

What started as the solo project of vocalist Melissa Bonney in 2018 has evolved into one of symphonic metal's slickest, high-drama propositions. Ad Infinitum's melodeath/symphonic infusion takes inspiration from times of opulence and danger; their 2020 debut, *Chapter I: Monarchy*, was themed on the French Revolution, while *Chapter II* focuses on the legacy of the tyrannical Vlad The Impaler. The concept is brought to life amid lavish, gothic-tinged arrangements on opener *Reinvented* and galloping powerful choruses on *Unstoppable*, coming to a head in a barrage of grit and polish on sparkling closer *Lullaby*. Ad Infinitum have cemented themselves as one of symphonic metal's most promising bands.

FOR FANS OF: Epica, Amaranthe, Nightwish

DANNII LEIVERS

THE ANSWER LIES IN THE BLACK VOID
Forlorn
BURNING WORLD

Ambient soundscapers embark on an alt-doom adventure

Whilst ostensibly a doom record, this band's debut attempts to wrongfoot you at every turn. Given that Martina Horváth and Jason Köhnen work together in experimental ambient act Mansur and have between them served with Thy Catafalque, Celestial Season and others, their genre-aversion shouldn't be a surprise. While hardly shy of glowering, Sabbathian episodes, the duo rely more on vibe than genre tropes. Horváth's commanding voice coaxes, aches and wails as the pair craft something ambitious and immersive that channels Wino's mournfulness, the Peaceville Three's early goth dabblings and moody industrial pop that wouldn't sound out of place on the *Crow* soundtrack.

FOR FANS OF: Blackwater Holylight, Darsombra, Insect Ark

ALEX DELLER

ANTI RITUAL
Expel The Leeches
INDISCIPLINARIAN

Blackened hardcore missives from the chaotic heart of Copenhagen

Specialising in frenetic blackened hardcore, Anti Ritual emerge from a sludgy tar-pit of colossal riffs for their debut. The seven years since their self-titled EP have been utilised wisely. Anti Ritual's onslaught is all-encompassing, a vulgar display of gut-punch sonics that still leave enough room for surprises, such as the ascendant falsetto of *Monetary Man* or the chorus guitar tones that pepper *Necrocapitalism*. They have a social conscience too, with *No Human Is Illegal* and *Franchise Coffee Bars And Internment Camps* spelling out their perspective with laser-guided precision. If you like the idea of Behemoth's grandiosity played with Converge's furious pace, then you're going to want *Expel The Leeches* in your life.

FOR FANS OF: Converge, Behemoth, Napalm Death

REMFRY DEDMAN

This is what happens when you offer Black Label Society Gold Blend

BLACK LABEL SOCIETY

Doom Crew Inc.

SPINEFARM

Ozzy's berserker-in-chief still refuses to relinquish his crown

USED TO A semi-nomadic lifestyle during normal circumstances, Zakk Wylde has nonetheless put his enforced time percolating at home to good use. When he's not hilariously promoting his intense Valhalla Java coffee, he's managed to honour his dedicated fans and roadies with Black Label Society album number 11. And while you probably know all the hallmarks in store from the bearded wizard of widdle, it's also unsurprising that *Doom Crew Inc.* largely delivers these with feverish aplomb.

The hulking *Set You Free* and the swing of *Gather All My Sins* pack considerable clobbering power, with the former already making its presence felt in the band's live set. Messrs Osbourne, Iommi, Ward and Butler still have a large impact on proceedings, with *Destroy & Conquer* and *Gospel Of Lies* both steeped in Sabbath's decadent 70s heyday. And of course, as well as the bullish bites and pinched harmonics come the tender, piano-led ballads. *Forever And A Day* may fall short of the necessary emotional clout, but the simple *Love Reign Down* and twang of *Farewell Ballad* are perfect vehicles for Zakk's soulful croon.

Not every song on offer hits the mark, but what's most remarkable throughout is that 33 years since his first spotlight on *No Rest For The Wicked*'s *Miracle Man* is that Zakk still has the ability to summon the most thrilling electric guitar solos. Skilfully straddling the fine line between self-indulgent and astute, the rumbling *Ruins* and *Shelter Me* are given new life thanks to a blur of lightning-fast scales and eccentric wails. At times it feels like a victory lap for one of the titans of six-string hedonism who's increasingly lacking worthy opponents. They may be appearing less frequently nowadays, but *Doom Crew Inc.* affirms every Black Label Society album has plenty to savour.

FOR FANS OF: Black Sabbath, Orange Goblin, Monster Magnet

ADAM REES

APOLLO STANDS

Interstellar

SELF-RELEASED

Tentative adventures along the prog/nu metal borderlands

The sheer scope and ambition displayed on this second album from the Norwich progressive metal quintet is breathtaking. Unfortunately, it doesn't sound like Apollo Stands know what kind of band they want to be yet, pinballing between prog and nu metal, like a strange hybrid of Kings Crimson and 810. *Synthetic*'s skittering electronic beats and *Insolarus*'s gentle pianissimo conclusion are both highlights, but *Pick Up* just sounds awkward. Some ideas work better than others and a more ruthless weeding-out process wouldn't go amiss. But for a band to attempt some of the more ambitious material here and pull it off is impressive.

FOR FANS OF: King Crimson, King 810, Tesseract

REMFRY DEDMAN

ARCHSPIRE

Bleed The Future

SEASON OF MIST

Canadian tech death dealers feel the need for yet more speed

Armed with a jet-propelled rhythm section and a vocalist to rival Scatman John, *Bleed The Future* may be even faster than Archspire's previous efforts. Crammed into an exhilarating 30 minutes, the eight tracks are collectively the most technically accomplished feat of the death metallers' career, with enough breathing space offered by the melodic breaks so that it's never an exhausting ordeal. Yet even through the dense swarm of notes and beats, the Canadians remain fiendishly catchy. From the maelstrom of *Drone Corpse Aviator* to *Drain Of Incarnation* and the title track's stunning lead work, hooks and memorable moments stand out aplenty among the relentless barrage and Oliver Rae Aleron's almost comically rapid vocals.

FOR FANS OF: Beneath The Massacre, Origin, Allegaeon

ADAM REES

BAD WOLVES

Dear Monsters

BETTER NOISE

California riff-wielders put a seal on their internal fissures

If there's one thing Bad Wolves need right now, it's a well-received album. The fallout from the departure of vocalist Tommy Vext opened a whole barrel of worms, the subsequently aired dirty laundry dividing their fanbase and threatening to halt all the momentum they'd built by the end of the last decade. Mercifully, *Dear Monsters* is a return to form. It's a punishing mix of groove and heavy metal that has new singer Daniel 'DL' Lasckiewicz slot in seamlessly. Whether it's the air-punching *Lifeline*, the serene *Springfield Summer* or the aural assault of *On The Case*, this in an uncomplicated, uncompromising barrage of riffs and choruses to sing at the top of your voice.

FOR FANS OF: Five Finger Death Punch, Hellyeah, Godsmack

ELLIOT LEAVER

MARCUS ROBINSON/PRESS

BAILER
Disposable Youth
BLOOD BLAST DISTRIBUTION

Ireland's hardcore debutants keep pace with their promise

If you've been keeping an ear on the UK underground scene lately, Irish quartet Bailer may well be a name you're familiar with. Some excellent EPs and live shows have made *Disposable Youth* a fairly well-anticipated debut full-length release. And, like all good debuts, it's a record that's very much delivered on the initial promise. It's fair to say that hardcore's wheel hasn't been reinvented here. But what Bailer do is so powerfully seductive that you'd have to have some kind of circle-pit allergy to not get excited by Every Time I Die and Cancer Bats-aping bangers like *Gateway Drug* or *Cruel Master*, which features an appearance from Conjurer's Brady Deeprose. This is a dangerous collection of savage riffs, massive beatdowns and paint-stripping vocals – job very much done.

FOR FANS OF: Every Time I Die, Poison The Well, Employed To Serve

STEPHEN HILL

BE'LAKOR
Coherence
NAPALM

More progressive death grandeur from the Australian battlegrounds

With their 2016 epic, *Vessels*, snatching 'Best Heavy Album' in Australia's The Age Music Victoria awards, expectations are high for Be'lakor's fifth album. Emerging from a five-year silence with impressive force, the progressive death metal outfit's opening epic, *Locus*, entreats with a 10-minute voyage that journeys across a plethora of expansive, engaging and contrasting musical landscapes. These characteristics of melodic and rhythmic exploration hold fast throughout, led by guitarists Shaun Sykes and George Kosmas. The latter also provides near-demonic, guttural vocals, that could easily have emanated from the band's tabletop wargaming namesake. Despite a familiar palette of thematically bleak, death metal colours, *Coherence* harbours a captivating level of depth and diversity, mesmerising with a constantly shifting, atmospheric maze of rich musicianship.

FOR FANS OF: The Black Dahlia Murder, Dimmu Borgir, Rivers Of Nihil

LUKE MILNE

BEAST IN BLACK
Dark Connection
NUCLEAR BLAST

Finnish power metallers return to club you into submission

After setting the bar high with their 2017 debut, *Berserker*, Finnish power metallers Beast In Black failed to reach the same giddy heights with their second album, 2019's *To Hell With Love*. *Dark Connection* sidesteps that same fate; everything this time around is bigger and better. Accept-esque, studs'n'leather metal gleams in the darker crevices between polished melodies on *Bella Donna*, while shades of Nightwish reside alongside bloopy solos on Manowar cover *Battle Hymn* and *Dark New World*. Yet *Dark Connection*'s best moments are its most overblown. *Highway To Mars* recalls band founder and guitarist Anton Kabanen's previous band Battle Beast at their most rampant, but the highlight is *One Night In Tokyo*, which lands gleefully somewhere between 8-bit *Super Mario World* anthemia and Culture Beat's 90s club classic, *Mr. Vain*. This righteous, silly fun is just what the pandemic ordered.

FOR FANS OF: Battle Beast, Nightwish, Accept

DANNII LEIVERS

BONDED
Into Blackness
CENTURY MEDIA

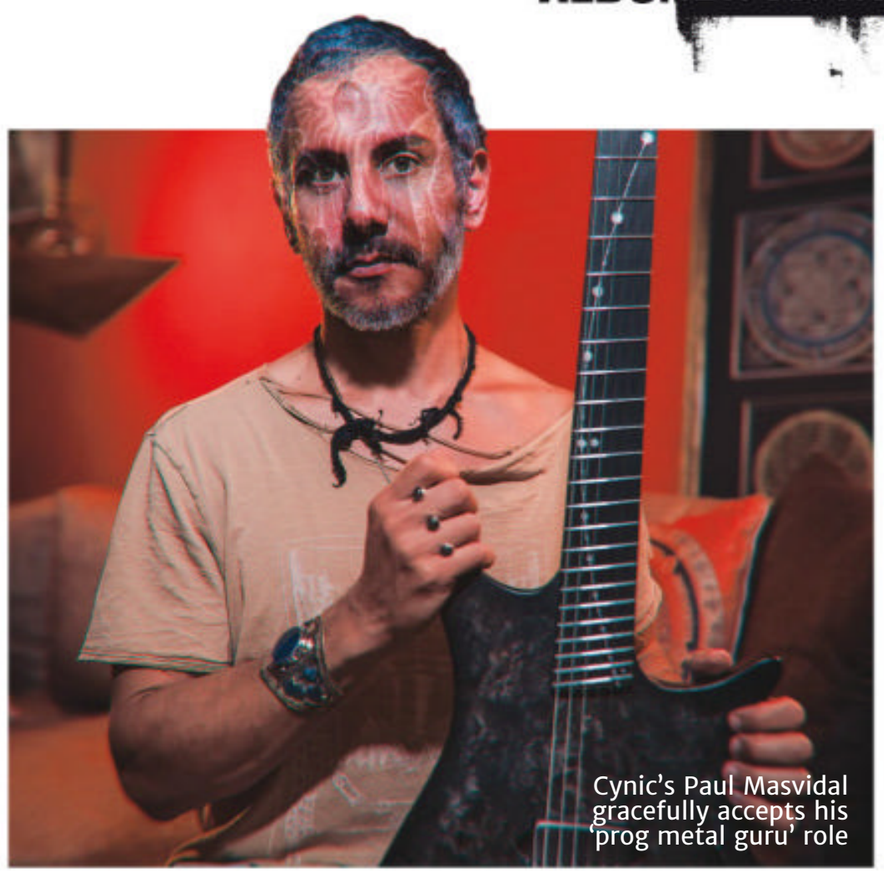
German/Greek thrash alliance bring their frustrations into focus

With a line-up featuring current and ex-members of Sodom, Suicidal Angels, Despair and Assassin cooped up for more than a year after the tour cycle for their previous album lasted a grand total of one show, you'd expect *Into Blackness* to be furiously bursting at the seams. And while that assessment of their brand of thrash is spot-on, credit is due to the band for remaining on the rails with strong melodies, harmonically rich guitars and a super-tight rhythm section. *Watch* and *Lilith* possess baby boomer anger manifested into classy nods to the Bay Area and Ruhr District, and even when things go slightly askew, like the awkward mix of classic stadium rock and mid-paced Metallica on *Destroy The Things I Love*, an exceptional vocal hook and/or ripping solo salvages the day.

FOR FANS OF: Megadeth, Destruction, Overkill

CONNIE GORDON

EKATERINA GORBACHEVA/PRESS



Cynic's Paul Masvidal gracefully accepts his 'prog metal guru' role

CYNIC
Ascension Codes
SEASON OF MIST

Florida's prog metal kings shower us with beautiful things

WITH UGLINESS AND horror all around us, a new Cynic album has never been more welcome. Paul Masvidal's progressive metal pioneers have only been an intermittent force for musical good over the past three decades, but every one of their releases has been both revelatory and gently magical: a testament to the uniqueness of their vision, and to the elegance with which they have executed it.

Ascension Codes arrives with a backdrop of grief and loss – former colleagues Sean Reinert and Sean Malone have both passed away since the release of Cynic's last album, *Kindly Bent To Free Us* – and from its title onwards, this is obviously, in part at least, a loving tribute to dear, departed loved ones. And yet, as with everything the band have released since the immortal *Focus* in 1993, *Ascension Codes* is also full of hope and beauty and an intoxicating sense of transcendent wonder.

This is also an album full of technically dazzling musicianship and songs that mischievously defy any rational description. Cynic have never repeated themselves, but within the rich textural swirls and delicate melodies of *The Winged Ones* and *6th Dimensional Archetype*, the same heady spirit of invention that informed *Focus* is a nourishing, if spectral presence. Metal still provides a frequent bedrock for Paul's ideas, and there are plenty of great riffs on offer, but this is a deep, emotionally rich prog album at heart.

Informed by everything from futuristic jazz fusion to shimmering dream pop ambience, and with Paul's ghostly voice bleeding through the melee like a beam of light, songs like the tense and tumultuous *Architects Of Consciousness* and the agile future-prog of *Mythical Serpents* are simultaneously immersive and strangely soothing. From the embers of loss, one of our finest bands have conjured another blazing tribute to music's restorative powers.

FOR FANS OF: Ihsahn, Obscura, Tesseract

DOM LAWSON

Exodus take the 'If it ain't broke...' approach

EXODUS
Persona Non Grata
NUCLEAR BLAST

California's volatile thrash devotees double down on the riffage

IT'S HARD TO say which is more volatile: Exodus's incessant thrash metal attack, or their line-up. Eighteen members have comprised the speed freaks during their 42-year rampage, none of whom have held their post for the entire ride. Ex-singer Steve Souza reconciling with guitarist Gary Holt for 2014's *Blood In, Blood Out* spawned hopes of stability, but Gary's Slayer moonlighting and drummer Tom Hunting's cancer battle have kept nails nibbled. Now, with Slayer entombed and Tom mercifully on the mend, 2021 seems the ideal time for Exodus to flaunt their arsenal at full force – and the primary weapons are those hulking axes.

Gary grips the lead songwriter reins to make *Persona Non Grata* an hour-long metal guitarist's wet dream. Gone is the electronic march that commenced *Blood In...*, as every second is dedicated to ticking off the checklist of thrash riffery. The technicality quota is filled immediately by the title track's blistering fingers before *R.E.M.F.* lobs in the inevitable hefty open-E-string chugs. Just as gleefully volleyed at the wall are twin leads à la the NWOBHM masters on *Slipping Into Madness*, *Prescribing Horror*'s looming arpeggios and, crazily, bluegrass licks to open *Lunatic-Liar-Lord*.

Steve Souza scraps for dominance intermittently, like when his Bon Scott-gargling-sandpaper rasp surprisingly softens on *The Years Of Death And Dying*. However, pseudo-political sloganeering sometimes plagues his lyrics. Although *The Beatings Will Continue (Until Morale Improves)* is a witty anti-cop brutality anthem (*'A little PMA through pepper spray... Take their beatings and smile'*), *Clickbait* is an annoyingly vague swing at partisan journalism.

Despite some twists, *Persona Non Grata* is essentially Exodus savagery amplified for yet another new decade. After a lifetime of balls-out thrashing, that may not excite everyone. All the same, loyalists get a riff-addled return, hopefully kickstarting a more stable future for these maniacs.

FOR FANS OF: Overkill, Evile, Slayer

MATT MILLS

BORNHOLM
Apotheosis
NAPALM

Hungary's extreme metal heathens make some fruitful sonic forays

The blackened Hungarian pagans return with a hammering onslaught of black metal, thrash and the odd flourish of NWOBHM. 2016's *Primaeval Pantheons* opened with a sawn-off blast of pure violence, but the ideas waned towards the mid-section. With *Apotheosis*, Bornholm have fulfilled the promise it suggested. Surging black metal mayhem abounds, though you can hear echoes of Metallica's *Black Album* in the devastating heaviness of *My Evangelium* and *Darkened Grove*. These subtle forays add texture and depth, distinguishing Bornholm from their contemporaries and revealing a considerable gift for writing ultra-heavy music that's catchy as hell. Bornholm's best yet.

FOR FANS OF: Hypocrisy, Suffocation, Blood Incantation

STEPHEN HILL

BURNING TONGUE
Prisoner's Cinema
AQUALAMB

New York riot-starters form an aggro musical alliance

This debut LP is a riotous expulsion of gritty NYHC and Swedish death metal. *Prisoner's Cinema* doesn't deviate too wildly from its simple equation, but the formula is just about compelling enough to sustain 38 minutes. *False Light* marries the hardcore ferocity of Trap Them with anthemic Slayer-style riffs, whilst *Howler* lives up to its name, bringing a Keith Buckley sense of deranged bug-eyed intensity to frontman Chris Marotta's vocals. *Cult-De-Sac* is thudderingly relentless and *Pigs Will Swing* brings an oppressive air to proceedings by slowing the tempo a notch. There's nothing particularly new under the Burning Tongue sun but as a soundtrack to society's collapse, it's a fitting epitaph.

FOR FANS OF: Entombed, Slayer, Every Time I Die

REMFRY DEDMAN

BURNING THE OPPRESSOR
Damnation
CANDLELIGHT

Canada's unequivocal death metallers prolong their suffering

Burning The Oppressor don't really deal in any of the nuance or subtleties that have crept into the world of extreme metal. The band's fourth full-length is as quintessentially death metal as any record you'll hear this year; like a magpie they borrow the

PRESS

CONTRITION
Broken Mortal Coil
DISORDER RECORDINGS

Chicago mercenaries embark on a streetcleaning rampage

Contrition vocalist Jerome Marshall may be Cobalt's live bass player and Gary Naples might drum for November's Doom, but the music from these loose cannons from the Chicago scene has little to do with its instigators. This band come across as a far crustier, dirtier d-beat machine. They're always on the verge of collapsing under the weight of the spiky fuzz they keep spitting at us, and constantly hypercharged with the combined rumblings of buzzsaw guitars and crashing cymbals. But the longer *Broken Mortal Coil* goes on, the colder and more complex it gets, in a very urban, industrial sense. The repetitive *Added Subtraction* recalls early Godflesh, while the concluding nuclear reinvention of Nirvana's *Tourette's* leaves behind a strong and sick aftertaste you can't easily get rid of.

FOR FANS OF: Totenmond, Crowbar, Disbelief

OLIVIER BADIN

DARKWOODS MY BETROTHED
Angel Of Carnage Unleashed
NAPALM

Tuomas Holopainen aids a Finnish black metal resurgence

The huge gap between Darkwoods My Betrothed records has not gone unnoticed by the Finnish black metal group. *Angel Of Carnage Unleashed* sees them cram 23 years' worth of advancement and evolution into a furious nine-track package. Improving and expanding upon ideas and motifs they experimented with in their initial tenure in the early-to-mid-90s, the band traverse the realms of symphonic, Viking and epic black metal, infusing a maelstrom of raging intensity with nimble keys, swelling strings and blaring brass. Supplied by Nightwish's Tuomas Holopainen (formerly a session musician, now graduated to full member), these symphonic flavours underpin the magnitude of grandeur Darkwoods My Betrothed achieve. The rest of the band prove no slouches in the epic stakes either when loosed on tracks like *Murktide And Midnight Sun* and *In Thrall To Ironskull's Heart*.

FOR FANS OF: Immortal, Helheim, Necronautical

RICH HOBSON

DOLD VORDE ENS NAVN
Mørkere
LUPUS LOUNGE

Norway's black metal guardians reconvene in mad splendour

With three current or ex-members of Dødheimsgard involved – including Vicotnik on vocals and Satyricon founder Haavard on guitar – Dold Vorde Ens Navn were arguably destined to be intuitively bizarre, and yet there's a strong streak of traditional, blackened majesty that underscores many of the songs on the Norwegians' debut. Opener *Jeg Vil Ha Det Morkere* and the thunderous, pagan squall of *Løgnens Abstinenser* are gently eccentric, but their debt to the old school is undeniable. The weirdness really bubbles to the surface as *Mørkere* evolves, as sprawling, progressive pieces like *Det Falt Et Lys I Min Mørke Krok* venture into misty-eyed neo-folk-cum-chamber music, before bringing the blackened hammer firmly down again. Peaking with the neoclassical fever dream of *Syke Hjerter*, this confirms that weird is still very much the way forward.

FOR FANS OF: Ved Buens Ende, Dødheimsgard, Borknagar

DOM LAWSON

DUST MOUNTAIN
Hymns For Wilderness
SVART

Enchantment and eeriness from Tampere's cosmic commune

With a name comprising two heavy US rock bands of the 70s, you might wrongly anticipate this as Oranssi Pazuzu bassist Toni Hietamäki's retro stoner jam kickabout. Dust Mountain may channel many intense musical ghosts from the Age Of Aquarius, with a sound shrouded in green haze, but at the quietest extreme of what constitutes rock – barring the sludgy chords and feedback trails of *Apollo*. There's a weighty darkness conjured and rousing crescendos reached. But guitars are jangled, and riffs come from mandolins and Mellotrons, echoing the spookier songs from all the old folks' old folk-rock heroes, until *Bird Hymns* skips a groove to evoke a late-80s 4AD Records vibe. If not All About Eve's evil twin, a sinister stepsister who's been heavily sedated for her own good.

FOR FANS OF: Hexvessel, Coven, Trees

CHRIS CHANTLER

SMALL MERCIES

Where EP is short for 'Epic Potential'

THE ANSIBLE
Existing To Repeat
SELF-RELEASED

Although inspired by the harsh-to-melodic elements of Loathe, Spiritbox and Deftones, these Texans never quite reach the same depths on their five-track EP. *Existing To Repeat* is intriguing and moreish nonetheless.

DANNII LEIVERS

GIÖBIA & THE COSMIC DEAD
The Intergalactic Connection
HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

Italy's Giöbia present three different angles on retro sci-fi psych sonics, while Glasgow's TCD splurge out one noisy 20-minute lysergic jam. Hazy-brained head music for those still in search of space.

CHRIS CHANTLER

IVAR BJØRNSON & EINAR SELVIK
Hardanger
BY NORSE

This EP explores its creators' historical legacies. *Heim Til Yggdrasil* amplifies the solemn grandeur of Enslaved's *Return To Yggdrasill*, while *Hardanger* hosts a chorus of Enslaved/Wardruna alumni.

TOM O'BOYLE

MEMORIST
Oni/Kijo
SELF-RELEASED

The combination of nu metal with more extreme elements might be fairly commonplace these days, but when mixed correctly it can still be very powerful, as these five often crushing but always instantaneous bangers prove.

STEPHEN HILL

SCARECROW
Raise The Death's Head
RELAPSE

Led by Exhumed's Matt Harvey and boasting two members of Death Angel, Scarecrow's scabrous thrash attack was always going to be authentic, old school and vicious as fuck. And so it proves. Everything about this rules.

DOM LAWSON

TEN56.
Downer: Part 1
OUT OF LINE MUSIC

Dripping in aggression and anguish, this debut EP sees members of Betraying The Martyrs, Uneven Structure and more unleashing six groove-battered diatribes shot through with glitchy synths and ludicrously low-ended breakdowns.

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

Hypocrisy form a very patient alien welcoming party

HYPOCRISY
Worship
NUCLEAR BLAST

A masterclass in anthemic melodeath from Sweden's finest

FEW PEOPLE ON this planet can make extreme metal as anthemic as Peter Tägtgren and Hypocrisy, which probably explains some why the band are so fixated on finding extra-terrestrial life. Eight years on from the last Hypocrisy record, Tägtgren has kept himself busy by releasing a new album with his electro-industrial band Pain and writing, recording and touring with Rammstein's Till Lindemann in the project that bears that singer's name, as well as producing records for the likes of Sabaton, Discharge and Immortal. But if you think such a varied workload might have him thinking of taking a leap into the stylistic unknown for Hypocrisy's 13th album, you'd be desperately wrong.

Since shifting from also-ran Floridian death metal in the early 90s, Hypocrisy have held dominion over their sonic output in a way that would do Motörhead or Bolt Thrower proud. Sure, there's variation, but it comes with a tight leash that never lets the music stray too far from their obscenely addictive mixture of muscular brutality and snarl-along catchiness. And good gods, is it fucking *glorious*. Acoustic guitar intro aside, *Worship*'s title track arrives with the kind of heraldry usually reserved for the end of days (or at least a top-tier stadium gig), with wails of showy guitar giving way to a 200mph thrash attack that makes full use of the band's buzzsaw low-end.

From there, every inch of *Worship* is a testament to Hypocrisy's masterful craftsmanship. Mid-pace bone-powdering death metal meets impossibly hooky choruses, the likes of *Greedy Bastards* and *Children Of The Gray* offering an intoxicating masterclass in how melodeath needn't water down its most extreme inclinations. Thirty years in, Hypocrisy aren't shaving down any of the edges – they invite you for a closer look so they can take your eye out.

FOR FANS OF: **The Crown, Bolt Thrower, Entombed**

RICH HOBSON

E-FORCE
Mindbender
MIGHTY MUSIC

Voivod's former frontman returns to thrash's outer limits

After spending the best part of the 90s blazing a trail fronting the seminal thrashers Voivod, Eric Forrest set sail for new pastures in 2001 and formed a solo band. While E-Force, who have adopted the critically acclaimed Canadian's nickname, hasn't been the most prolific of projects, their four LPs thus far are pleasingly pummelling, and the latest addition to their canon is their most explosive yet. This time around bolstering their robust thrash attack with ambient passages (*Futures Past*), some synths (*Hellucination*) and slower tempos (*Traumatized*), *Mindbender* sees the trio at the peak of their powers and tracks like the groove-tinged *Insect* mark them out as a serious force to be reckoned with.

FOR FANS OF: **Vektor, Voivod, Kill Ritual**

EDWIN McFEE

EMIGRATE
The Persistence Of Memory
EMIGRATE PRODUCTION

Rammstein guitarist dusts off his box of treasures

Four studio albums in and the initial one-off project of Richard Krupse is now its own fully fledged creative entity, with the Rammstein guitarist proving there are no barriers when it comes to continuing Emigrate's sonic evolution. Delving into the archives, Krupse has revisited nine songs of times past and lovingly restored them, marrying penetrating melodies, driving electronica and industrialised rock precision. Twenty years since its inception and the anthemic *Freeze My Mind*, laden with analogue synths and throbbing basslines, stomps with fresh purpose, while brooding guitar lines and chromatic stabs lurch ominously through single *You Can't Run Away*. Dodgy *Always On My Mind* cover version aside, *The Persistence Of Memory* is an infectious collection.

FOR FANS OF: **Gary Numan, Depeche Mode, Skold**

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

EYES WIDE OPEN
Through Life And Death
ARISING EMPIRE

Sweden's melodic metallers remain happy to play a supporting role

Taking their melodic death metal roots and blending it with sonorous metalcore, Sweden's Eyes Wide Open are now five albums deep. There's some lovely guitar playing present here, most notably on the title track and *Wildfire*. Drummer Lucas Freise delivers exceptionally – particularly on *Echoes* – whilst Erik Engstrand's vocals are a delightful balance of ice-cold screams and gruff cleans. There isn't much here that hasn't been done before or better by other outfits, but EWO certainly aren't slouches with this brand of metal. *Through Life And Death* is an extremely solid body of work, despite the fact they're not reinventing the wheel.

FOR FANS OF: **Trivium, The Unguided, Orbit Culture**

ELLIOT LEAVER

PRESS

GAAHLS WYRD
The Humming Mountain
SEASONS OF MIST

Norway's iconic metal vocalist heads off on a gothic tangent

From Trelldom's fevered mantras through Gorgoroth's blackened anthems and his turn with Wardruna to God Seed and Gaahls Wyrd, Gaahl's creative process clearly abhors stagnancy. Gaahls Wyrd's 2019 debut, *GastiR – Ghosts Invited*, saw the vocalist sacrifice some of his doggedly vicious aggression for a moodier, more immersive tone. *The Humming Mountain* extends that vision with five tracks that see Gaahl alternating between atmospherics (*The Seed*, *The Sleep*) and chaotic roar (*The Dwell*). More interesting are the title track and *Awakening Remains – Before Leaving*, which infuse mid-tempo BM riffing with sombre, gothic undertones. Think Killing Joke jamming with Enslaved. While it delivers some genuinely spell-binding moments, *The Humming Mountain* feels too abbreviated as a stand-alone work. Perhaps their next offering will tie everything together.

FOR FANS OF: Gehenna, Tsjuder, Heilung

JOE DALY

GRAND CADAVER
Into The Maw Of Death
MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN

Old school Swedish death, delivered by experts

Safe in the knowledge that Swedish death metal is *still* the most brilliantly ripping sound around, Grand Cadaver have kept things straightforwardly nasty on their full-length debut. Fronted by Dark Tranquillity's Mikael Stanne, and with former Treblinka guitarist Stefan Lagergren in the ranks, this low-key supergroup have both the credentials and, as it turns out, some of the gnarliest riffs of the year. *Into The Maw Of Death* falls somewhere between the flagrant retro-grind of latter-day HM-2 worship and the more nuanced and grimy brutality of early At The Gates, but these chaps know their deathly onions and every one of these songs boasts at least one brightly lacerating hook to savour. The best moments – the fierce but eerie *Soul Infestation*; the doom-dunked horror of the title track – are perfectly crafted chunks of proud underground filth.

FOR FANS OF: Bloodbath, Entombed, Entrails

DOM LAWSON

HALCYON DAYS
Keep Myself From Sinking
INDIE RECORDINGS

Oslo melodic hardcore crew seek the exit sign for anxiety

Part of a burgeoning Norwegian hardcore scene along with bands like Blood Command, Oberst and Lüt, Oslo's Halcyon Days sit at the melodic end of the spectrum. Their fourth album packs an emotional post-hardcore gut-punch; full of self-loathing, doubt and the search for healing. Opener *Awaking* makes a cathartic entrance on a barrage of percussion while vocalist Robbe Madsen's impassioned screams portray a protagonist on the edge: *'Enjoy the silence / The wind in your hair / Your time is soon up',* before a gang-chant chorus takes the song in a powerful new direction. These songs go full throttle – an accurate portrayal of a mind buzzing with anxiety – but there's nuance too, in the hopeful, spiralling melodies of *Sleepwalking* and *Collecting Scars* that hint at brighter days. It's the sound of a band hitting their stride.

FOR FANS OF: While She Sleeps, I Prevail, Oberst

DANNII LEIVERS

IMMINENCE
Heaven In Hiding
ARISING EMPIRE

Scandic post-hardcore crew trace over the floorplans

Swedish post-hardcore/metalcore band Imminence clearly have their shit together. This is the band's fourth studio album since 2014, alongside various EPs, which makes them prolific writers and creators. The production here is mightily impressive as well, with soaring strings elevating the songs when necessary and powerful, technically impressive riffs hitting you hard when that gut-punch is needed. So, yes, clearly, Imminence know what they're doing. It's a shame, then, that what they have decided to do is… well… whatever Architects have already done. Lead vocalist Eddie Borg sounds almost identical to Sam Carter, and his band lean in so heavily on the Brighton superstars' last couple of albums that this record should really be called *Holy Heaven In Hiding Hell*. It's a good performance, albeit one that's fatally hampered by some absolutely shameless plagiarism.

FOR FANS OF: Architects, Wage War, More Architects

STEPHEN HILL

Negură Bunget's Negru is gone, but sublimely remembered

NEGURĂ BUNGET
Zău
LUPUS LOUNGE/PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

Transcendental Transylvanians offer a haunting farewell

A 27-YEAR LEGACY culminates with the release of an album that might not have been. *Zău*, the third instalment of Negură Bunget's Transylvanian Trilogy (their ninth studio album overall) was completed by the band in the wake of co-founding member, drummer and conceptual visionary Gabriel 'Negru' Mafa's untimely death at the age of 42 in 2017. *Zău* was already in the process of being written, Negru having recorded the majority of his drum tracks, leaving the remaining members, vocalist Tibor Kati, guitarist/keyboardist Adrian 'OQ' Neagoe and folk instrumentalist Petrică Ionuescu to respectfully fill in the blanks.

The result is an album laden with even more spiritual portent than their alchemical blend of Romanian mythos, folk music and black metal has always instilled, the final part of a tribute to the ancient, forested bowers of their homeland as much as it is a farewell to its creator. More bombastic than predecessor, *Zi*, the five tracks exert swathes of uplifting, powerful symphony, making 16-minute-long opener *Brad* a graceful force to be reckoned with, as an ethereal quality is lent to the track by guest vocalist Manuela Marchi. *Iarba Fiarelor* follows, the use of a nai (folk flute) creating a free-spirited, fairytale-esque quality that makes the oncoming sonic wall even more towering when it eventually overshadows.

Tinerețe Fără Bărânețe is brazenly bombastic, its keening atmospherics enveloping a bounding riff that explodes in a flurry of blasts before proving hypnotic at the apex. *Toacă Din Cer* makes for a grand finale, the earthy clack of wooden percussion a precursor to grandstanding riffing under soaring atmospheres, a fitting end to a band whose legacy will live long in black metal circles. *Zău* is rife with the spirit of its creative mastermind, a eulogy to his vision and a final love letter to the mist-enshrouded forests that so inspired him.

FOR FANS OF: Drudkh, Fen, Panopticon

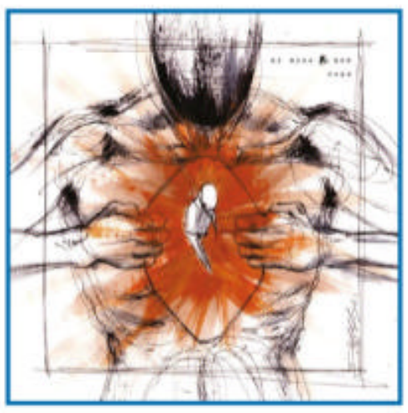
TOM O'BOYLE

DANIEL DOROBANTU/PRESS

Of Mice & Men get into contemplative mode

OF MICE & MEN
Echo
SHARPTONE

Orange County metalcore veterans overcome their false restarts



SURVIVING A CHANGE of vocalist is always a touch-and-go situation. When guitarist Aaron Pauley stepped up as Of Mice & Men frontman in 2016, as a more accomplished frontman in every way, he no doubt ensured the Orange County metallers' longevity. Yet the two records during his tenure, 2018's *Defy* and 2019's *Earthandsky*, were patchy affairs. That all changes here. OM&M's seventh album, their first release on new label Sharptone, is a compilation of three EPs that they've drip-fed steadily throughout 2021. And its 10 tracks represent the strongest, most consistent, nuanced and, yes, heaviest material the band have released since 2014's *Restoring Force*.

Aaron has said the new material was recorded with headphones and concentration in mind, rather than pits and festival stages. And while *Timeless* and *Obsolete* are expertly crafted slabs of gleaming metalcore that go like the clappers, they're imbued with a cathartic melodicism and a lyrical depth that feels rejuvenated. Huge grooves and sinister electronics add nuance to *Pulling Teeth* and *Levee*, the latter seeing Aaron screaming *'It can only rain for so long'* over a monster, Make Them Suffer-esque breakdown. Every metal band will say their new material is their best and heaviest yet. Usually it's bollocks, but for OM&M, it's a statement that rings true on both accounts.

The final three tracks are the album's most experimental. *Fighting Gravity* exudes an Architects' *Dead Butterflies* vibe, while sparse piano adds breathing space to the title track. But it's album closer *Helplessly Hoping* that lands the killer blow. Just Aaron's voice exposed and layered over a bittersweet violin, it proves just how far the band have pushed outside their metalcore cage. Finally, OM&M are on the form of their lives.

FOR FANS OF: Architects, Make Them Suffer, The Devil Wears Prada

DANNII LEIVERS

JOINTHUGGER
Surrounded By Vultures
MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN

Nordic stoner/psych crew look out amongst the stars

Jointhugger are a spaced-out, psychedelic stoner doom trio from the fjords of Norway. Recalling cosmic giants such as Sleep and Yob, theirs is a sprawling, ever-shifting mass of fuzzy guitars, towering riffs and tar-thick atmosphere. From calm beginnings with *In Dire Need Of Fire* to the flamenco flourishes of lead single *Midnight* and the bluesy rock of *Empty Space*, there's plenty here to enjoy for fans of the leaf and doom of the fuzziest variety. While they're not bringing anything particularly new to the table, there's enough variety and breaks from the stoner riffing, without losing any of its psychedelic properties, to keep fans of the genre entranced.

FOR FANS OF: Electric Wizard, Yob, Sleep

WILL MARSHALL

KANAAN
Earthbound
JANSEN

Wait an aeon for cosmic Nordic psych and two come at once...

Kanaan's fourth album in as many years sees the Norwegian instrumental power trio venture out into the desert in search of ever heavier sonic hallucinogens. Where previous records explored krautrock and free jazz, *Earthbound* ups the riff ante. *Return To The Tundrasphere* is as epically daft as its title suggests, with giant fuzz riffs giving way to hazy noodling. The album combines lengthy explorative tracks with briefer interludes to engaging effect, the hippy trip of *Mirage* rapidly extinguished by the groove/noodle interplay of *Mudbound*. Closer *No Star Unturned* coalesces gradually out of a nebula of fuzz, a kaleidoscope of glittering notes. A record to blaze up and zone out to if ever there was one.

FOR FANS OF: Kyuss, Nebula, Hawkwind

TOM O'BOYLE

KHEMMIS
Deceiver
NUCLEAR BLAST

Colorado three-piece take doom metal to a higher level

Khemmis have long been masters of delectable doom metal, but their fourth album is the sweetest cut yet. Instantly, *Avernal Gate* forces itself into the discussion of the best tracks this year. An acoustic intro explodes into speed metal ludicrousness, before sludge riffs boom, juxtaposed by tender vocal lines. Come its conclusion, you've even been assaulted by some screaming black metal fury. The rest of *Deceiver* is similarly transcendent, decimating the borders of doom while shimmering with melodic triumph. *Living Pyre* bursts with call-and-response death metal verses, *The Astral Road* thrashes through NWOBHM licks and *Obsidian Crown* is exhilaration incarnate. The last time the genre felt this invigorating was when Ghost unveiled their *Opus Eponymous*.

FOR FANS OF: Pallbearer, Fvneral Fvkk, Iron Maiden

MATT MILLS

WORLD SERVICE
Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe

ADLIGA
Vobrazy
SELF-RELEASED

This doom project explores the folklore of Adliga's native Belarus. Vocalist Kate Sidelova combines soaring grace and raw-throated reproach, the narrative feel fuelled by funereal riffing and post-metal touches.

TOM O'BOYLE

DALISAY
Ang Trahedya Ng DalisayAt Ketungin
SCREAMING SKULL

Hellbent on reducing their native Philippines to rubble, Dalisay's untamed barrage veers from jagged blackened riffing to jack-hammer groove metal. A perverse, exuberant hybrid.

DOM LAWSON

DUNGEON STEEL
Bloodlust
SIGNAL REX

More than two decades after their Scandinavian corpsepainted elders, Ecuador's Wampyric Rites' spit out their own alter-ego dedicated to 80s epic/speed metal, with a distinct flair and galloping solos.

OLIVIER BADIN

TRAVIS SHINN/PRESS

KNIVAD
Insidans Ärrvävnad
SUICIDE

Crust-laden Swedes brandish both Molotovs and candelabras

Knivad's second album should strike a chord with crustcore fans still trying to figure out the proggy crawl of Tragedy's *Darker Days Ahead*. It does the similarly unthinkable by forcing denizens of the d-beat to contemplate a slow, coruscating churn in tracks like *Avdelning 369* and *Talet*, as well as figuring how *Dricka För Att Glomma* and *Förbrukad* live up to crust expectations while also exploiting reverb and haunted house piano sound like Sisters Of Mercy on a Converge bender. Playing with contrast can sometimes bite a band in their unfocused butt. And while Knivad aren't entirely immune from sloppiness, their gravitation between piss-scented punk and supernatural post-goth is worthy of attention.

FOR FANS OF: Martyrdöd, Unkind, Integrity

CONNIE GORDON

LINDY-FAY HELLA & DEI FARNE
Hildring
NORSE

Wardruna's elemental vocalist uncovers new modes of mesmerism

Lindy-Fay Hella's second album finds her in a brave new place, working alongside some storied musicians and pushing her unique sound deeper into uncharted waters. While far removed from her work with Wardruna, *Hildring* offers a similarly uncommon mix of the timely and the timeless. This duality is perhaps exemplified by its shared appreciation of traditional Sámi music and Depeche Mode, with the beguiling versatility of Hella's voice cocooned within rippling synths, wheezy harmonium notes and percussion like rune-inscribed bones rattling inside a catskin pouch. From the jaunty folk of *Taag* to the shape-shifting avant-pop of *Gjelet* and the quiet, glowering insistence of *Brising*, the results are both strange and mesmerising. A thoughtful, compelling work that seems as though it might have been born simultaneously of earth, water and air.

FOR FANS OF: Wardruna, Ana Roxanne, Populi Vuh

ALEX DELLER

LOCK UP
The Dregs Of Hades
LISTENABLE

Celebrated deathgrind coalition welcome back Tomas Lindberg

'Supergroup' is overused. However, in the grindcore underworld, this rabble of Napalm Death, Misery Index and Brutal Truth members deserves to have the label slapped on their chests. At The Gates' Tomas Lindberg rejoining only strengthens Lock Up's family tree, and it's his tortured wails bouncing off co-frontman Kevin Sharp that makes this fifth studio album such a violent resurgence. Underpinning the vocal mania is a thrashing comparable to *Harmony Corruption* by bassist Shane Embury's day job. While its darting from relentless speed to death metal grooves keeps *Dregs Of Hades* engaging, it's scarcely new territory for the band or their genre – bar *Crucifixion Of Distorted Existence*'s grandiose doom. Those craving a new death-grind mutation won't find it, yet that doesn't stop this hurricane of riffs – hammered home by one of metal's best voices – from proving invigorating.

FOR FANS OF: Brutal Truth, Napalm Death, Insect Warfare

MATT MILLS

THE LURKING FEAR
Death, Madness, Horror, Decay
CENTURY MEDIA

Cthulhu's Tomas Lindberg-fronted house band return to terrify

The Lurking Fear's first album, *Out Of The Voiceless Grave*, instantly stood out as a superior, old-school beast. Still gleefully steeped in Lovecraftian dread, the band's tooth-rattling attack has reached even greater heights of efficacy on the follow-up. Diving deeper into notions of cosmic horror, Tomas Lindberg Redant and his fellow Swedes have both refined the monstrous squall of their debut and injected it with a jolting dose of lysergic weirdness. *Death, Madness, Horror, Decay* begins with startling, explosive power: *Abyssal Slime*, *Death Reborn* and *Cosmic Macabre* are three of the most wildly intense metal songs anyone will hear this year. But there are gruesome depths to explore here too, via the dense disquiet of the title track and warped interlude, *Kaleidoscopic Mutations*, featuring a deranged cameo from Autopsy's Chris Reifert. A terrifying rush from start to finish.

FOR FANS OF: Dismember, Firespawn, The Crown

DOM LAWSON

Swallow The Sun experience a total eclipse of the heart

SWALLOW THE SUN
Moonflowers
CENTURY MEDIA

Finland's lords of gloom offer a masterclass in catharsis

THE BODY OF work that Juha Raivio has amassed since the death of his life partner, muse and bandmate Aleah Starbridge in 2016 represents surely the strongest half-decade of affecting creativity in doom history. From Trees Of Eternity's posthumous sole opus, *Hour Of The Nightingale* in 2016, through Hallatar's elegiac 2017 debut, *No Stars Upon The Bridge*, to Swallow The Sun's crushing 2019 LP, *When A Shadow Is Forced Into The Light*, the cathartic urge to escape into music to express profound sensations of grief has produced a surge of heart-rending masterpieces that compel uneasy immersion. It's no surprise that *Moonflowers* continues this run, maintaining the standards impeccably. These consummate Finnish miserabilists have been a consistently potent, trustworthy doom force for nearly 20 years, and this eighth album is wrought with all the love, care and taste that these seasoned craftsmen bring to their art.

Opening with the words *'Will you die in misery?'*, *Moonflowers* makes no bones about its morbidity, but you'll also find greater flashes of animation, colour and dynamism, augmented by distinctive piano and strings from "classy but playful" Finnish ensemble Trio NOX (whose contribution has warranted a second disc of their instrumental tracks). Within the dejected throb of *Keep Your Heart Safe From Me*, sweet and lively solos coalesce in a brief mid-section strum that's virtually light-hearted. Meanwhile, the bleary-eyed, imploring sweep of *Enemy* and the stately gothic gloom of *Woven Into Sorrow* are both riven with frosty death metal riffs that briefly kick loose before subordinating to the gloom.

Sporadic bursts of brooding aggression build to a furious climax in volatile closer *This House Has No Name*, its hair-raising emotional intensity perhaps manifesting what Juha means when he confesses, "I deeply hate this album. I hate where it takes me, how it makes me feel."

FOR FANS OF: My Dying Bride, Anathema, The Cure

CHRIS CHANTLER

JUSSI RATILAINEN/PRESS

Voices: a band worth investing in

VOICES
Breaking The Trauma Bond
CHURCH ROAD

Akercocke alumni reveal an exhilarating kaleidoscope of darkness

FINDING NEW AND distinct ways to colour something black is quite the skill when the, *ahem*, shadow of at least five decades of heavy, dark and disturbing music lurches over any modern metallic or gothically inclined band. It's the precise reason why we should champion a band like Voices with as much vigour as we possibly can.

2014's breakout album, *London*, is still finding a new audience and revealing new perspectives to longtime listeners all these years later, and 2018's *Frightened* only increased interest in the band. You'd like to think that *Breaking The Trauma Bond* will represent some kind of elevation into even greater cult status. This is a singular record that features moments of genuine genius in its ranks, and sounds unlike anyone else currently operating in metal.

The album's title track is one of those genius moments, taking baroque piano, rhythms that swing from blastbeats to experimental hip hop and some vampiric vocals that croon and soar like an extreme metal version of Andrew Eldritch from The Sisters Of Mercy. This is two songs in and already we're speaking about one of the broadest albums of 2021. When you consider that we're about to be hit with grindcore, post-rock, groove metal, post-punk and, incredibly, a song like *She Speaks To Him In A Dream* – a ballad that sounds like Talk Talk creating the soundtrack to 80s cult movie *Labyrinth* – it only becomes all the more impressive.

Everything ends with the six-minute-long *Photographs Of A Storm Passing Overhead*, which could be Satyricon covering Bauhaus's goth classic, *Bela Lugosi's Dead*, and trying to compartmentalise what you've just heard is quite the undertaking. Yes, individually you may have heard all of these elements before, but it's hard to remember the entire history of bleak music, from Black Sabbath to The Cure, from Bathory to Siouxsie & The Banshees, ever being distilled together quite so expertly as this. Masterful.

FOR FANS OF: **Christian Death, Danzig, Emperor**

STEPHEN HILL

MONUMENT OF MISANTHROPY
Unterweger
TRANSCENDING OBSCURITY

Brutal death metal outfit tackle real-life brutality

Austrian serial killer Jack Unterweger committed murder in West Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and the US. He was convicted in 1974 and started a writing career in prison. Having convinced lobbyists he'd been rehabilitated, he was released in 1990 – only to resume killing within months. The latest album from these international death metallers is themed around his crimes. Sonically, the band have created a formidable work, its consistency perhaps owing to the adoption of a central theme – and its momentum is unstoppable. The shift from thunderous double-kick mayhem to mid-paced chug in *Exceptionally Sadistic* is masterfully negotiated. A prurient wallow in real human pain or a morbidly compelling journey through a damaged psyche? Perhaps both.

FOR FANS OF: **Kvelertak, Minus, Eyes**

STEPHEN HILL

OBSCURA
A Valediction
NUCLEAR BLAST

Munich's tech death maestros enter a bold new future

Having spent two decades forging a path out of the shadow of Necrophagist, 2021 sees a virtuosos Christian Münzner and Jeroen Paul Thesseling on guitar and fretless bass respectively. It's this celebratory tone that permeates *A Valediction*, with the classicisms of opening duo *Forsaken* and *Solaris* adding a regal air to proceedings. Vocalist/guitarist Steffen Kummerer has always had a knack for combining consummate musicianship with memorable hooks, with even the whirlwind of notes and fiddly dynamics of *Orbital Elements II* and *When Stars Collide* – featuring Soilwork's Björn Strid – balanced with melodic sheen. Those looking simply to be blown away by some of the most dazzling skills in metal need look no further than the sumptuous lead explosions on *The Neuromancer.*

FOR FANS OF: **Death, Alustrium, Gorod**

ADAM REES

NYT LIV
Den Døde Sol
INDISCIPLINARIAN

Danish hardcore troupe turn up the glare on album number two

Nyt Liv are the latest in a line of superb Scandinavian hardcore artists who seem to have a little something extra. The Danes' second

SAHAR VAGAN/PRESS

OMNIUM GATHERUM
Origin
CENTURY MEDIA

Melodeath veterans finally reach a chorus of approval

Nine albums in, Finland's Omnium Gatherum are closing in on the *x* factor that will truly allow them to step into the spotlight. Their combination of 80s-style synth and hard-driving melodeath has always felt tailor-made to fill a dancefloor, but often feels incomplete without a massive chorus. *Reckoning* sounds like it was written for the world's most epic action movie, but without a massive hook loses any anthemic potential. Thankfully, from *Fortitude* on the band find entirely new horizons, venturing into almost prog metal territories. Though OG have had Gojira-like moments in the past, the second half of *Origin* sees these elements fully subsumed into their sound, feeling like a jigsaw finally slotting into place as they expand out to discover exciting new possibilities.

FOR FANS OF: Children Of Bodom, Amon Amarth, Gojira

RICH HOBSON

OPERA DIABOLICUS
Death On A Pale Horse
SEASON OF MIST

Power/prog metal renegades return with a spell from the wilderness

First meeting at a theatrical presentation of Umberto Eco's *The Name Of The Rose*, bassist Adrian de Crow and guitarist/organist David Grimoire resolved to construct a heavy metal concept album around the novel. Enlisting ex-Candlemass/Yngwie vocalist Mats Levén and Swedish drum journeyman Snowy Shaw (ex-Mercyful Fate/King Diamond), *1614* emerged in 2012 – a solid display of narrative-driven gothic doomy power-prog tropes that nevertheless made little impact. Opera Diabolicus promptly disappeared, only now emerging after nearly 10 years, relinquishing medieval philosophy in favour of a metal-as-hell bespoke horror epic about apocalypse, witchcraft and plague. With Levén's emotive storytelling, Snowy's flamboyant percussive masterclass, the strength and audacity of the songwriting, the eccentric showmanship, the grandiloquent symphonics and the sheer headbangability, Opera Diabolicus have ramped everything up to a pitch that compels attention.

FOR FANS OF: Cradle Of Filth, King Diamond, Andrew Lloyd Webber

CHRIS CHANTLER

PATHOLOGY
The Everlasting Plague
NUCLEAR BLAST

Ex-Cattle Decapitation sticksman cranks up the carnage

Spearheaded by original Cattle Decapitation drummer, Dave Astor, Pathology are the death metal equivalent of a Jason Statham movie. Over 15 years, and despite a raft of line-up and label changes, he's released 11 albums, with all the expected tools. Happily straddling the line between brutal and classic US death metal, but now with enough melodic hooks to counterbalance their over-mechanised blastbeats, Pathology mastered the genre's complete range. Even their mascot – a demented priest fighting an army of raging zombies – is death metal to the bone. The result may be a tad generic and could easily be swapped for any other entry in their extensive discography, but are you expecting Uncle Jason to do anything else but kick villains' arses?

FOR FANS OF: Cannibal Corpse, The Black Dahlia Murder, Skinless

OLIVIER BADIN

PORTRAYAL OF GUILT
Christfucker
RUN FOR COVER

US sonic racketeers find themselves at cross purposes

Good for the listener, but not so good for the lawn of that listener's neighbour, is the fact this trio's racket is as subtle as their third full-length's title. The riffs on *The Sixth Circle*, *Bed Of Ash* and *Sadist* – disappointment would abound had this album not contained a song called *Sadist* – land somewhere between Botch's discordant math-rock, second-wave black metal mid-range abuse and Cold Meat Industry label sonic pummelling. On the flipside, the Texans sometimes fall into a 90s screamo methodological writing trap — if a part runs its course, move on without worrying if the next bit actually relates or flows. Though when heads are lowered and focused, the vast, dynamic industrialised wailing of *Dirge* and *...Where The Suffering Never Ends* has *Christfucker* living up to its billing. Not literally, of course.

FOR FANS OF: Pg.99, Godflesh, Skin Chamber

CONNIE GORDON

Volbeat contemplate their storied career

VOLBEAT
Servant Of The Mind
EMI

Denmark's continent-conquering rockers add a hint of menace to their melody

ALTHOUGH NEVER QUITE hitting the same heights in the UK as they have in mainland Europe – they've headlined major festivals for years across the Channel – Danish rockers Volbeat have become a truly beloved outfit on these shores. Widely praised for their live shows and metal-meets-rockabilly sound, they've grown in stature with every passing record and tour. And speaking of records, it's time for a new one. Eighth album, *Servant Of The Mind*, was written in the space of three months by lead member Michael Poulson and, although clocking in at a shade over an hour, it flies by before you've even noticed.

What's the secret? That would be the storytelling. Michael has always been great at invoking images within his lyrics, but *Servant Of The Mind* sees him ramp that up a notch alongside the band's hallmark bells and whistles – whether that's stadium-sized riffs like in *Say No More* or breakneck pace of the punky *Wait A Minute My Girl*. The way that *The Devil Rages On* effortlessly tells an intricate story about the Dark Lord taking on a human form, for example, showcases a man at his creative zenith, bolstered by a group of people around him who collectively see his vision and make it an audible reality.

Another such highlight is *The Sacred Stones*, a dark and sprawling journey accompanied by thrash undertones and a truly hefty guitar chug straight from the Tony Iommi Book Of Licks. However, Michael is still capable of lighter and more melodic tales, such as *Dagen Før* and the driving power of *The Passenger*, which, along with the more menacing side of Volbeat's repertoire, have resulted in arguably the band's most consistent and enjoyable effort yet. Set aside a whole day for this and listen on repeat: you won't regret it.

FOR FANS OF: Metallica, Alter Bridge, Airbourne

ELLIOT LEAVER

ROSS HALFIN/PRESS

Der Weg Einer Freiheit: post-black metal's dream band

DER WEG EINER FREIHEIT

Noktvrn

SEASON OF MIST

Germany's atmospheric black metallers put their peers in the shade

YOU CAN'T TALK about contemporary atmospheric black metal without mentioning Germany's Der Weg Einer Freiheit. With their fifth album, they solidify their spot at the top of their national scene and set a high bar for everyone else, pairing melancholy and melody with aggression and anguish.

By making *Noktvrn* an album centred around the nighttime, the band have once again subscribed to a conceptual approach. Inspired by Frédéric Chopin's *Nocturnes*, they indulge in darkness, the fading of light, the fantastic realm of dreams and the freedom that can be found within. Their nods to classical music might be subtle, but you only have to look at the finesse and skill these compositions have been crafted with to understand that Der Weg Einer Freiheit have long outgrown the (post-)black metal label.

After the acoustic guitar intro, *Finisterre II*, a tie-in to their previous album and its title track, songs like *Monument* and *Morgen* prove that the Germans have further honed their talent to create intriguingly complex song structures and sounds that take all the right turns to leave the roads most travelled by their contemporaries. Recorded live, these songs have reached a new level of density and a natural flow that carries you through the entirety of the album. *Immortal* and *Haven* that are the real standout tracks, being not only the band's first two songs in English, but also the first to mainly feature clean vocals.

While former tourmate Dávid György Makó, aka The Devil's Trade, lends his distinct voice to illustrate the push and pull between light and dark, calm and turmoil on *Immortal*, it's DWEF vocalist and mastermind Nikita Kamprad himself whose delicate singing turns the dreamy album closer *Haven* into a post-rock monument that seems to be building up all the way to the stars. Let's hope they never come down.

FOR FANS OF: Imperium Dekadenz, Wolves In The Throne Room, Agrypnie

CHRISTINA WENIG

SARKE

Allsighr

SOULSELLER

Nocturno Culto-fronted black metallers open up to all eras

This band of berserkers formed in 2008 as a vehicle for Khold and Tulus's Thomas 'Sarke' Berglie to indulge his more experimental side. Sarke since have become a traditional group, yet their music remains anything but. Featuring a wealth of extreme metal heavyweights in their ranks, not least Darkthrone vocalist Nocturno Culto, album seven is a bewitching brew of 90s BM, classic 70s rock and 80s goth. Standouts include the weird but wonderful *Glacial Casket* and the scuzzy *Beheading Of The Circus Director*, which sounds like the bastard son of Hellacopters' first album and Rainbow's *Rising*.

FOR FANS OF: Khold, Darkthrone, Satyricon

EDWIN MCFEE

SEEYOUSPACE-COWBOY

The Romance Of Affliction

PURE NOISE

Turbulent, soul-scorched metalcore with a dark underbelly

The knowledge that vocalist Connie Sgarbossa almost succumbed to a drug overdose weeks after recording provides a grim subplot to this second full-length. It's a chaotic brew of unflinching honesty and inner personal struggles. Savage flurries of skin-peeling beatdowns and frenzied screams drive opener *Life As A Soap Opera Plot, 26 Years Running* and *Ouroboros As An Overused Metaphor*. The dissonant chug and clap-led breakdown of *Misinterpreting Constellations* serves as a love letter to early 00s math/metalcore, placing it somewhere between Eighteen Visions and Enter Shikari. Elsewhere, the title track's If I Die First collab is jam-packed with soaring choruses and tortured cries for an emotional outpouring with a visceral edge.

FOR FANS OF: Every Time I Die, Wristmeetrazor, VCTMS

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

SPIRITWORLD

Pagan Rhythms

CENTURY MEDIA

Colorado rockers take a bloody dive into the Wild West

If you're at all familiar with Spiritworld's previous work – a mishmash of jangly Southwestern garage rock with a dash of country – then just know that their latest album is going to blow your face off. A soundtrack to *Godlessness* – a novel written by vocalist Stu Folsom – *Pagan Rhythms* takes its cue from the Denver sound, where death metal riffage meets the lyrical pageantry of the Wild West. Chaotic tempos and grinding death metal riffs dominate *Comancheria* and *Godless*, while *The Bringer Of Light* reveals Folsom's deep familiarity with Slayer. If the Colorado scene is imagining a world where DM soundtracks the evolution of the Wild West, then *Pagan Rhythms* is the sound of a bloody, high plains massacre.

FOR FANS OF: Wayfarer, Sepultura, In The Company Of Serpents

JOE DALY

MARIO SCHMITT/PRESS

THECITYISOURS
Coma
ARISING EMPIRE

Teutonic metalcore devotees wring more anthems from the rulebook

On their second album, Thecityisours continue to cleave to the oldest metalcore trope in the book: a brutal verse followed by a soaring, clean chunk of anthemia. There's nothing on *Coma* we haven't heard many times before, but not all zingers have to reinvent the wheel. This London quintet have got a knack for writing satisfying choruses and bright guitar lines. In particular, the earworm melodies on the title track, *Violent* and the emotionally anthemic *Regret About Me* suggest this band could one day hold their own against closest peers Wage War and Beartooth. And while new vocalist Oli Duncanson carries the grit, soulful vocals from guitarist Mikey Page inject some nuance to the formula, especially on slow-burner *Madre*, which contemplates love and loss. Overall, this convincing, albeit familiar, collection of songs is about as anthemic as metalcore gets.

FOR FANS OF: Mallory Knox, Wage War, Beartooth

DANNII LEIVERS

THULCANDRA
A Dying Wish
NAPALM

Nineties-style death deliverance from Sweden-loving Germans

Ever since their inception in 2003, this German four-piece have openly worshipped at the altar of 90s Swedish death metal, delivering some ferocious music drawn from Dissection et al along the way. Thulcandra's fourth LP sees them once again in the thrall of that unmistakable Swedish sound and while *A Dying Wish* won't earn them any points in the originality department, the opus is loaded with exciting pit anthems in the making. The incendiary opener, *Funeral Pyre*, ends their six-year silence between records with a roar and sets their stall out strongly for the mayhem to come. *Nocturnal Heresy* boasts some insane blastbeats from drummer and album MVP Alessandro Delastik, while the epic *Devouring Darkness* could serve as the soundtrack for the impending apocalypse.

FOR FANS OF: Dissection, Entombed, Sacramentum

EDWIN MCFEE

UNLEASHED
No Sign Of Life
NAPALM

Swedeath/Viking veterans keep their riffs battle-ready

Fourteen albums in and there's still no sign of Ragnarök for these Swedeath veterans. The classic Swedish death metal outfits stood out for the sheer catchiness of their tunes; obviously Entombed took this to extremes during their death'n'roll era, but the hooks were always there, buried beneath the crackle'n'fuzz of the riffing, the pulverising rhythms and the raw-throated vocals. *No Sign Of Life* is a contemporary case in point. It sets the tone with the double whammy of *The King Lost His Crown* and *The Shepherd Has Left The Flock*, both instantly memorable, with the punkish edge common to much Swedeath. They're still banging on about their Viking ancestors, but when the riffs are this good, it's easy to overlook what might seem like an exhausted theme, and if that's what fires 'em up, who are we to argue?

FOR FANS OF: Dismember, Entombed, Bloodbath

JOSEPH STANNARD

VOLUMES
Happier?
FEARLESS

Californian prog metallers regroup after bust-ups and tragedy

It's been a tough couple of years for Californian prog-metallers Volumes. The replacing of vocalist Gus Farias with original member Michael Barr caused a huge spat, and guitarist Diego – and brother to Gus – tragically passed shortly after revealing he was also no longer with the band. However, with Max Schad providing temporary six-string duties whilst the core of Barr, Raad Soudani, Myke Terry and Nick Ursich look for a replacement, they've been able to conjure up a fourth album and firmly put all recent adversity behind them. Highlights include the one-two of *Bend* and *Get Enough*. The former floats with technical grace, the latter pummels with swing and bounce in the guitars – and the riff-fest that is *Man On Fire*. It's certainly been a rocky path to reach this moment, but Volumes can now look to the future with increased assurance.

FOR FANS OF: Periphery, Monuments, Tesseract

ELLIOT LEAVER

RESURRECTIONS

Unearthing the latest metal reissues

Paradise Lost: the Byronic men of doom

LONG BEFORE MISERY was fashionable, **PARADISE LOST** were writing songs that wrenched at the heartstrings and brought depth and colour to the gloom. The entirety of the Halifax heroes' early efforts are compiled on *The Lost And The Painless* (Peaceville) **[9]**, a seven-disc (and one cassette) compendium of a pivotal moment in the evolution of heavy music. From their early demos and debut album, *Lost Paradise*, to the seminal *Gothic* and two full live shows, this classy box set is both the UK death/doom motherlode and a deeply swanky artefact to fresh shed tears over.

Let's face it, **KISS** never really had the attention span for the album format, but 1976's *Destroyer* **[8]** came closest to being a bona fide full-length classic. With typical finesse, Gene Simmons' all-conquering goon squad are celebrating their best-loved album's 45th anniversary with a comically opulent seriously-fucking-deluxe version that boasts four audio discs, a Blu-ray with an ear-shafting 5.1 surround mix, a 68-page book and enough related ephemera to choke a hippo. One for the diehards, obviously, but the album itself remains a belter and its artwork is boss-level iconic. *Beth* is still fucking rubbish, mind you.

HAMMERFALL have given their underrated third album an anniversary upgrade. The remixed *Renegade 2.0* (Nuclear Blast) **[8]** fills the room with much more depth and colour than the original, but there was nothing much wrong with gleaming anthems like *Templars Of Steel* and *The Way Of The Warrior* in the first place. An unsung gem, now with added oomph.

Finally, US veterans **ALL THAT REMAINS** have every right to celebrate their third album, *The Fall Of Ideals* (Craft) **[8]**, with a 21st-century swank-up and vinyl debut. One of the few albums from metalcore's mid-00s peak that had the songs to back up the (Adam Dutkiewicz-produced) sound, it still hits the spot; with giant, sugary hooks, thuggish riffs and ignorant breakdowns by the van-load.

DOM LAWSON

LIVE REVIEWS

AFTERSHOCK FESTIVAL 2021

DISCOVERY PARK, SACRAMENTO

Metallica go back in Black at California's four-day revival of the spirits

THURSDAY

Aftershock 2021 has been delayed, extended to four days, and suffered multiple band cancellations, including headliners Limp Bizkit, My Chemical Romance, and Faith No More being replaced by The Original Misfits and Cypress Hill. However, it's also been two years since many of these bands performed and most fans – who are required to show vaccination proof or COVID tests to enter – last enjoyed live music, so the park is buzzing with a shared wish to have an unbeatable time.

The first of three Bay Area thrash metal bands to play this Thursday is **DEATH ANGEL**, who storm through *Throne To The Wolves* and *Mistress Of Pain* to a sea of horns, before **KNOCKED LOOSE** reinforce the calibre of their songwriting and Bryan Garris's powerful presence with tracks like *Oblivion's Peak*. As the sky darkens, lights circle before **EXODUS** appear and fans air guitar along to *And Then There Were None* and celebrate the return of drummer Tom Hunting, who recently beat cancer. **ANTHRAX** take advantage of the larger stage with wild pacing and smoke, and Joey's vocals sound sharp for *Got The Time*. Scott Ian also honours the sad loss of music industry staple, former Fear Factory manager Scott Koenig, before **TESTAMENT** return us to a valley of horns and vertically held axes. *Souls Of Black* sounds gloriously sleazy tonight. Headliners **CYPRESS HILL** know how to make fans move regardless of their battle vest patches, delivering hit after hit powered by teasing transitions from DJ Lord, rhythmic flare from percussionist Eric Bobo, and B-Real and Sen Dog weaving through puffs of green smoke.

FRIDAY

On Friday, the hike between stages is hindered early by merry, zigzagging fans who just visited Metallica's Blackened Whiskey Bar. **AVATAR** are a tornado of flamboyance, air kisses and headbanging. *Colossus* and *The Eagle Has Landed* are as bonecrushing as they are theatrical and, too soon, we're left with a knowing wink and truthful throwaway "We are Avatar. And we have stolen the fucking festival and you know it." **BUTCHER BABIES** provide some fun with Heidi Shepard's fierce roar and brilliant crowd control before **SUICIDAL TENDENCIES** sees frontman Cyco Miko darting around the stage, exhausting his vocals ensuring that the pit is suitably explosive. It's special to see bassist Tye Trujillo, son of Metallica's Rob Trujillo, with his dad's former band tonight, too.

Danish rockabillies **VOLBEAT** offer crisp sound, rich vocals, a saxophone and a solid cover of Metallica's *Don't Tread On Me* before **METALLICA** deliver the first of their two unique setlists tonight. *No Leaf Clover, Whiskey In The Jar* and a controversial but striking performance of *Frantic* from *St. Anger* are sprinkled amongst traditional hits like *One* and *Seek And Destroy*. The band take a minute to catch their stride but, once settled, Kirk Hammett's poignant solos and Rob Trujillo's thudding basslines reverberate through the park as occasional flames shoot from stage. Meanwhile, the stark absence of *The Black Album* tracks suggests what Sunday's set will bring…

SATURDAY

Day three sees fewer Misfits t-shirts around than expected but considering they were only announced as My Chemical Romance's replacement six months ago, fans may be elsewhere. **AUGUST BURNS RED** come armed with technical fretwork and an all-commanding frontman, and *Defender* and two walls of death make for an exhilarating morning. New Zealand Māori metallers **ALIEN WEAPONRY** are loud for just three members and their haka, groove-ridden thrash and *Kai Tangata* all make for a stomping affair.

Don't tell Alien Weaponry they're 80 miles from the nearest beach

In This Moment create a Kabuki wonderland

When it comes to Metallica, we're never going to reach saturation point

STEPHANIE CABRAL

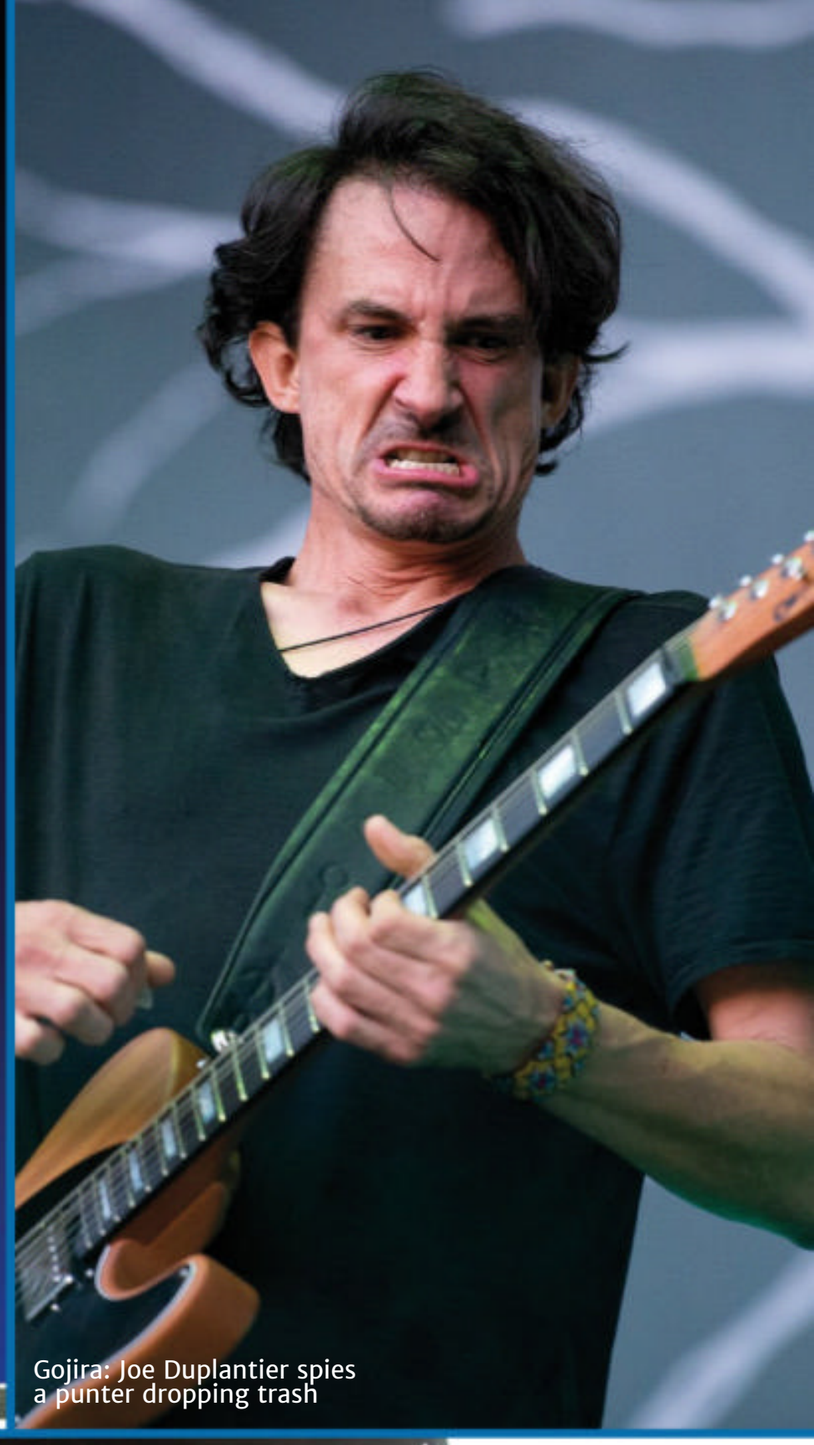
MACHINE GUN KELLY is a controversial line-up choice who's met with angry boos and flying objects amid the cheers today. Still, he commits to play on for all the real fans here, throwing middle fingers at the haters and tauntingly climbing the sound tent even as cans are thrown at him. It's a messy affair but nothing if not entertaining. **BODY COUNT** bless us with Slayer's *Raining Blood* led by Dave Lombardo on drums. Ice-T is in absolute control and *Drive By* pleases the OGs. Nearby, *Love* and *Another World* pour forth, courtesy of **GOJIRA** whose ethereal calms and blasting walls of sound are as precise as they are soul-crushing. The highly anticipated **MUDVAYNE** reunion sees Hellyeah vocalist Chad Gray having an absolute blast with costume changes. It's fast, energetic and deliberately unhinged, and even Misfits' nearby drum check cannot dim the joy that *Dig* brings. But now it's time for horrorpunk heroes Glenn Danzig, Jerry Only and Doyle – alongside Slayer's Dave Lombardo and guitarist Acey Slade – to beckon Halloween as **THE ORIGINAL MISFITS**. *Last Caress*, *Die, Die My Darling* (covered on Metallica's *Garage Inc.*), *Where Eagles Dare* and *Attitude* see the previously feuding members interact cheerfully, regularly knee-sliding across the stage and breaking bass guitars. Danzig's vocals are strong, Lombardo adds aggression to every song, and the stage is covered in giant jack-o'-lanterns and Crimson Ghosts. Likely due to this slot being slated for My Chemical Romance when tickets first sold, the crowd is thin, but the spirited nostalgia more than makes up for it.

SUNDAY

There are few better treats on the final day of a festival than **STEEL PANTHER**. Ballsy, sleazy and cheesy in all the best ways, they thunder through *Community Property* and *Weenie Ride*, sharing silly stories, impressions and X-rated lyrics, all fuelled by hair metal vocals and catchy songwriting. **IN THIS MOMENT** pick up the theatrical baton with cloaked figures and a creepy cover of Seal's *Fly Like An Eagle*. Maria Brink is captivating as she seductively screams her way through *Big Bad Wolf* and *Whore*. **MASTODON** provide a restrained but technical display including *Black Tongue* and new track *Pushing The Tides* before the disarming punk and *Ring Of Fire* cover from **SOCIAL DISTORTION** provide a pleasing sunset accompaniment and **RISE AGAINST** share a set of urgent, hooky belters that peak with *Satellite* and *Savior*. It's a unifying experience before **METALLICA**, who play Friday's missing staples, *Sanitarium* and *Creeping Death*, and deliver a full performance of *The Black Album* played in reverse order. The band oozes confidence, are vocally flawless, and are visibly enjoying every moment. These tracks were born to be played live and *Sad But True* is something special. Even despite the crowd size and fireworks, the performance feels emotional and intimate tonight.

NIK YOUNG

Mascara in the eye is no fun for Mudvayne's Chad Gray



Gojira: Joe Duplantier spies a punter dropping trash

Body Count, er, counting bodies

Mastodon's Troy Sanders blows away the cobwebs

STEPHANIE CABRAL

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OHHMS' Paul Waller has a close encounter

OHHMS
DEAD SLOW/DEATH GOAL
THE BLACK HEART, LONDON

Progressive noisemakers finally get the album launch they deserve

ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED, RATHER optimistically, for January this year, tonight's 'launch' for OHHMS' *Close* album, now comes with a host of amplified and pent-up emotions attached to it. Relief, excitement, disbelief – it all hangs in the air at the Black Heart tonight like a pheromonal scent even as recent Prosthetic signees **DEATH GOALS** take to the stage. Making a beeline for the turbulent heart of 00s noisecore, the duo's dense, dissonant, continually stress-tested melee, with vocals that sound like they're spasming to an overloaded electrical current, isn't preaching on behalf of the LGBTQA+ community, so much as speaking in tongues – a channel for so many frustrated spirits they can barely contain them.

For all their frontman's constant forays into the crowd, **DEAD SLOW** sound fairly one-dimensional at first, their punky belligerence piled on like a traffic jam with a bulldozer hitting the gas at the back and someone whipping a horse at the front. But what seems like a lack of dynamics gives way to galvanising stoner grooves building up within the songs, and stroboscopic percussion that gets a moshpit going, when people aren't being shouted at in their faces. Another band putting out an ultimately positive message while sounding far from self-satisfied, they go down a storm.

Physically at least, the Black Heart stage can't contain **OHHMS**. With vocalist Paul Waller and bassist Chainy Rabbit making camp on the floor, the latter next to a pedal board that looks like a model of a small city, there's a you-are-we intimacy tonight. Paul is genuinely humbled by the thought of finally letting the new songs loose live, and here they're fired up with a white-knuckle urgency that always sounds as through the Kent quintet are riding the crest of a storm, their tempo shifts a series of instinctive, reactive measures. But as much as stoner and doom have been part of their DNA, tonight reveals how much Isis they channel too. It's most apparent in the drop-out of *Revenge*, like light dappling off a vast rippling body of water, but also in the thoughtful traction of the beat and liberating bursts of guitar. Fraught yet ecstatic, it's an energy that whips through everyone here, Chainy being crowdsurfed the length of the room and back again like it's an act of communion.

Dead Slow have their own approach to mindfulness

JONATHAN SELZER

OVERTHROW
HELLFEKTED
THE BLACK HEART, LONDON

There's a fine line between the rough and the ready. **HELLFEKTED** have most of the grit you'd want from a blackened thrash band scavenging a war-torn aftermath, and a charismatic frontman to boot. But even if it's fitting that their music feels bolted together from spare parts, the lack of fluidity means they never click into the higher, maniacal gear needed. When they do hit a groove, they sound like a Carcass rehearsal demo, the noticeable nuts and bolts means they're still in battle-of-the-bands territory. It's taken 10 years for **OVERTHROW** to release their first album, *Strike Down The Saviour*, but tonight is a perfect argument for the benefits of taking your time. The four-piece's wall of sound isn't a cover-up for undercooked elements below, it's an expansive 360° vision helmed by the genuine emotion driving vocalist Jay White's howl. Often coming across like a more inflamed Trivium, their deeply integrated, know-their-shit elements of thrash and death metal aren't backwards looking, but rather always fully in the moment, reaching anthemic status from the sheer intrinsic energy at their command. A decade in, but this feels like the epicentre of something big.

JONATHAN SELZER

SÓLSTAFIR/VREID
SOGNDAL, NORWAY/HENGILL, ICELAND

In this enrapturing cinematic alliance, Norway's Vreid and Iceland's Sólstafir join forces with duelling live sets from their respective homelands – Vreid bashing away atop Storehogan Mountain, in Sogndal and Sólstafir set up on a wind-swept crag of moss-covered volcanic rock in Hengill. The bands alternate tracks while Norwegian historian Sturla Ellingvåg delivers a poetic narration of the shared mythology and history of the two cultures. *Arche*, a driving,riff-powered belter, ends with the lyric, *'Everything will be destroyed'*, which doesn't sound too bad, beholding the majestic fjord and lush green forests behind them. Focusing on their latest release, *Wild North West*, **VREID**'s six-track set showcases the band's power and spacious melodic alchemy. **SÓLSTAFIR** come out swinging with *Ótta*, and as Aðalbjörn Tryggvason hits the track's climactic scream, it's clear that the band have tapped into the primal energy coursing through the active volcano beneath their feet. Their spare and deeply immersive five-track set includes setlist staples *Náttmál* and *Fjara*. As live shows make their comeback, it's inspiring to see bands continue to explore new ways of bringing their music to the fans.

JOE DALY

DANI WILGRESS

Bridear: bombastic and fantastic

SABRINA RAMDOYAL

BRIDEAR

THE CASTLE AND FALCON, BIRMINGHAM

Japan's high-energy shredders bring joyful mayhem to the Midlands

HAVING SPENT THE better part of decade plying their trade in a technicolour blitzkrieg of J-Pop hooks, six-string shred and NWOBHM-fuelled idolatry, tonight is far from Bridear's first live rodeo. These high-energy mavens are, however, the first Japanese band to resume international touring post-COVID, with the *Into The Dark Forever* run, the four UK dates of which are the quintet's first shows back on our shores since 2019.

There's a reverent silence of sorts from this Birmingham crowd as the members, their collective backs to everyone, stand patiently while rising music box-type melodies begin tinkling out across this draughty hall. But such seemingly initial shyness merely belies the audio-visual spectacle that follows suit as *Ghoul, Ignite* and *Mirror* are the jump-off for creating an atmosphere of relentless speed and guitar-monies.

Natsumi drums like an Energizer bunny, dropping teeth-rattling snare licks in such fevered succession that one would believe it was her final opportunity to do so. But the fans are part of the atmosphere too, falling silent when vocalist Kimi reads out wonderfully endearing 'Thank you' messages from her iPad between songs, fist-pumping in formation and jumping devotedly during anthemic tubthumper *Pray*.

Soaring vocals clash enticingly with doom-laden keys and ominous soundbites on standalone single *Brave New World Revisited*, before ushering in newer material from this year's *Bloody Bride* release, it's amalgam of pop sweetness and metalcore serving up sugary-yet-speedy confections. Breaking out the six-string tandem and burning up their fretboards, shredders Misaki and Ayumi take centre stage for *Daybreak*, its earworm chorus joyfully exploding in a cloud of power metal bombast whilst the mid-song synchronised windmilling makes the title track a moment of dramatic and amusing excess.

Inevitably, comparisons will be drawn with such all-female counterparts as Babymetal and Lovebites but it's the genre-splicing curveballs – from gang vocals and groove-battered bass lines to synth-heavy assaults – that ultimately convince you to repeatedly venture deeper down the Bridear rabbithole. A bloody triumph of an evening.

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

Skindred: Benji's living statue act didn't last for long

SKINDRED

JAMIE LENMAN/SAINT AGNES

THE ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON

Newport's ragga metal ringmasters keep the good vibes circulating

SAINT AGNES ARE fucking loud, and that doesn't begin and end with the garage punk bursting from the amplifiers. While their calamitous jams incite an early evening mosh, frontwoman Kitty Austen ingratiates herself by declaring, "I've got a bigger dick than you!" Nuance clearly didn't get a ticket tonight. All the same, this rabble could soon be anointed as a must-see if they keep raging this charismatically.

Any hopes of reprieve are dashed by one look at **JAMIE LENMAN**, whose braces, moustache and minuscule island of hair connote a 1920s aristocrat off his meds. Backed only by drummer Jack Wrench, the ex-Reuben leader is a firebrand, his commanding scream and fast fingers deserving of the spotlight reserved almost wholly for him. A brutalised redo of Cyndi Lauper's *She Bop* fits ideally within a punk rock onslaught so blistering that another half-hour wouldn't have gone amiss.

Is there any live band more reliable than **SKINDRED**? If you've caught these ragga metal scallywags at any point in the last decade, you already know what you're in for. But, what you're in for is always a thrill: 90 incessantly interactive minutes with Benji Webbe as master of ceremonies, demanding movement as frequently as Mikey Demus belts out crunching riffs. The four-piece herald singalongs before even taking the stage, blaring *Blitzkrieg Bop* and *Thunderstruck* to get a sold-out Roundhouse limber. The odes continue when *Pressure* is interrupted for *Back In Black*, and again as a synth is literally tossed out for a cheeky *Jump*. By the end of the night, London's not only sang, but moshed, waved and, of course, Newport Helicoptered, where t-shirts, jackets and other concert-goers are thrown about with reckless abandon. The party only mellows for an acoustic *Saying It Now*, dedicated to those who have passed in the pandemic. It's an awkwardly pensive segue given the context, albeit nothing that *Nobody* and a drum'n'bass *Duality* can't counteract. Come the encore of *Warning* – the scourge of clothing everywhere – it's blindingly obvious that Skindred are still invigorating. Not that it was in doubt for even a second.

MATT MILLS

Jamie Lenman plays a Blinder

Saint Agnes show off their BDE

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FIVE MINUTES WITH LARISSA STUPAR VENOM PRISON

Venom Prison's screamer-in-chief on quitting drink and drugs, run-ins with Nazis and getting namechecked by Tom Hardy

WORDS: RICH HOBSON • PICTURE: ANDY FORD

What was it like growing up in Russia in the 90s?
"I had a really nice childhood. We lived in a very small place that was like a big village or small town. People there had their own animals – chickens, cows, pigs, so we had that too, and also grew our own veg. We had cats and dogs too, so I spent lots of my time caring for the animals and being friends with them."

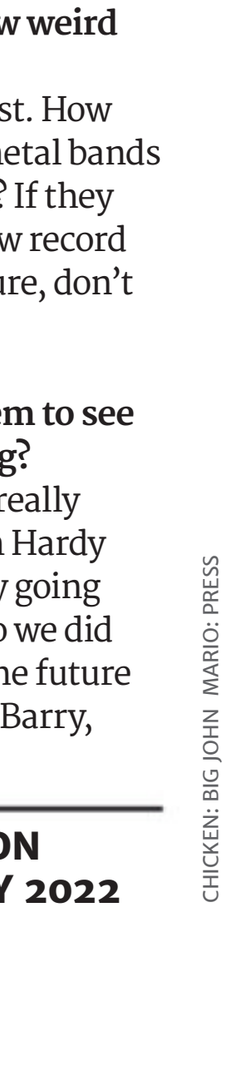
Did looking after those animals prompt you to become a vegetarian?
"It's kind of weird; I never considered vegetarianism [then] even though I had friends who were. But then I had a cat who ran away when I was 14 and that cat was my best friend, so I said to myself, 'I'm not going to eat meat until my cat comes back.' After a while I started thinking, 'There are places in the world that eat cats', so made the connection that there's no difference between a pet and any other kind of animal."

When did you go straight-edge?
"I went to a straight-edge gig when I was 16 and that was a major turning point for me. I'd started drinking when I was 13 and I'd drink almost every weekend without my parents knowing. At some point I realised I couldn't handle it – I'd wake up and not remember a single thing that had happened all weekend. After that the thought of drinking made me feel sick, so I gave it – and all other drugs – up."

How did you first become immersed with the music scene?
"We moved to Germany when I was 10 and at first we lived in this kind of refugee camp for Russians that were coming to the country. There was another girl there who became my best friend. We got into heavy music together and later started going to shows when I was around 13. A lot of the people we met were involved in left-wing politics so we also started participating in protests. At that point, there was a really big problem in Germany with neo-Nazis and right-wing culture, so there was a lot of work to do!"

Did you ever get into any trouble?
"Mostly when I was in my 20s, to be honest. Getting into fights and being arrested, being stopped by the police, that kind of thing. The scariest time was at a protest in Dresden – each year they'd put on this big march, the biggest neo-Nazi/right-wing rally in Europe, so we'd go to stop them. One year it was snowing and super-cold, we got surrounded by riot cops who then chased after us. It felt like being chased by actual stormtroopers."

How do you unwind when you're not writing/recording/touring?
"At the moment I'm watching *The Sopranos* because I've never actually seen it and I needed something really cool to get into. I've watched three seasons in a couple of weeks, so it's going well! I really love playing videogames on my Nintendo Switch, too. I'm not really a fan of shooters or anything – I just like fun games like *Pokémon* and *Ni No Kuni*, and *Mario Golf* too."



What was the last game you were obsessed with?
"It was a mobile game, of all things! We were in the studio and my Switch had died and I'd not brought a charger, so I decided to download one onto my mobile. It was a puzzle game a bit like *Candy Crush* and in the end I couldn't go 30 minutes without playing, so at some point I just had to delete the app."

***Venom: Let There Be Carnage* director Andy Serkis and star Tom Hardy recently played 'Symbiote or Death Metal Band' for IGN, and Venom Prison's name came up. How weird was that?**
"Not overly weird to be honest. How many other modern death metal bands our size are there these days? If they want to use a song off our new record that is coming out in the future, don't hesitate to ask."

Have you DM'd either of them to see if they'd like to come to a gig?
"Nah, would be weird, don't really know the guy, but heard Tom Hardy was in Barry [Island] recently going ham on the log flume ride, so we did a shout out. If he's about in the future and wants some chips down Barry, just drop me a message." MH

THE NEW VENOM PRISON ALBUM IS DUE IN EARLY 2022

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